

Synodality as a guarantee for the future of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia



His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Kerasounta

God has blessed us to be the vital link that connects the history of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia during its transition from the first to the second centenary. Throughout this 2024 celebratory year, marvellous events will take place from one end of Australia to the other, culminating in the Apostolic visit to the fifth continent of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew from October 4th to 19th. The anniversary events will certainly have a celebratory character and, at the same time, will also honour the persons, both clergy and laity, who decisively contributed to the God-pleasing growth of our local Church during the one-hundred-year course since its foundation. However, as our venerable Shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios has wisely mentioned, this anniversary consists not only of an opportunity to reflect upon and appreciate the past but, primarily, a springboard for our preparation for a dynamic future. We owe it to the new generation of children, the “buds” of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in the Antipodes, to lay sound foundations

for the new centenary that is dawning: by listening to their contemporary needs; responding to the challenges of our times and the multicultural society in which God has prescribed for us to live in; and distanced from past failures and mistakes, which separated instead of united, divided instead of multiplied.

Fully aware of the weight of responsibility that we have as the connecting link between the first and the second centenary, we confess that our hearts leapt with joy and bubbled with excitement upon hearing the recent announcement by our Ecumenical Patriarchate of the in-principle approval of the new Constitution of our Holy Archdiocese. Once again, the Mother Church of Constantinople, the Patriarch of our people, and the Holy and Sacred Synod, demonstrated in practice their loving interest and concern for our local Church, as well as their genuine regard for the God-pleasing progress, advancement, and prosperity of the Christ-loving plenitude of the fifth continent.

With the new Constitution in force, replacing the one established in 1959, a new chapter will open for our Holy Archdiocese. The establishment of the Synodal Structure through the introduction of a new Constitution and the institution of the Holy Eparchial Synod is a defining moment. Synodality is a basic principle of the organisation, administration and spiritual life of the Orthodox Church and has its roots in the first apostolic years. As His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew has already emphasised, “the Synod is the primordial structure and fundamental function of the Church and constitutes an essential expression of its unity and universality”.

Besides, throughout its two-thousand-year history, our Church always expresses itself synodically, through the local and regional and culminating in the seven Ecumenical Synods, which were convened to defend the Truth of our faith and the unity of the whole Body of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In modern times, all Orthodox Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches, as well as the Church of Crete and the Holy Archdiocese of America are governed by the synodal system (Holy Eparchial Synods). The convening of the Holy and Great Synod in Crete in 2016 was a leading ecclesiastical event of our days and comparative in scope regarding the expression of Synodality. The importance of the synodal institution is also underlined in the Message of this historic Synod, which characteristically stated: “The Orthodox Church expresses its unity and universality within a Synod. Synodality permeates the organisation of the Church, the way decisions are made, and determines its course”.

It is indeed a blessed development for our Holy Archdiocese that from now on, it will be governed by the holy Eparchial Synod under the chairmanship of our

Archbishop Makarios. This change in the structure guarantees that our Church will not only remain unwaveringly committed to its mission but, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we will walk on a safer path with more unity and substantive communion in Christ among us as well as with the Mother Church of Constantinople and Orthodoxy as a whole. “The most important ecclesiological work of the Synodal Institution”, declared the blessed Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, a leading contemporary theologian, “is the maintenance of the balance between the local Church and the ‘universal catholic Church’, which makes the local Churches one body”.

As such, it is evident that an invaluable gift has been bestowed upon us with the dawning of the second centenary of the Orthodox Church on the fifth continent. This may not lighten the burden of responsibility described at the beginning – as this responsibility is preserved in its entirety – nevertheless, it strengthens us a Body and fortifies our unity for it guarantees that we will walk synodically with our Archbishop in the lead and our Lord Jesus Christ as our head.

We owe immense gratitude for this immense gift and blessing to the venerable Centre of Orthodoxy and to the Primate of the Ecumenical Throne, His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, who reaffirmed his inexhaustible love and affectionate care for all children of the Mother Church, everywhere on earth. The conclusion of this humble missive cannot but be dedicated to our charismatic and visionary Shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia who, with genuine love for the human person and divine zeal for the progress of the Church, dedicates himself daily and tirelessly to healing the spiritual needs of his flock and fulfilling their noble visions and expectations. Undoubtedly, the new chapter that opens for our Holy Archdiocese after the historic decisions of our Ecumenical Patriarchate, clearly bears the signature of our venerable Shepherd. For this reason, the Christ-loving people of the fifth continent will be eternally grateful to him!

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