13/05/2024

Archbishop Makarios of Australia at the unveiling of the Battle of Crete Monument in Perth



“Let us never take the blessings of Freedom for granted but let us always strive to be worthy of the sacrifices made for it. Let us be inspired by the heroes of the Battle of Crete and be guided by their example as we face the challenges of our time.” This was the central message of the address delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia at the ceremony of the official Unveiling of the Monument in honour of the Fallen during the Battle of Crete, which was erected in the capital of Western Australia, Perth.

The honourable ceremony took place on Saturday, 11 May 2024, in Perth’s Kings Park, where the first monument in Australia that is exclusively dedicated to those who fought and sacrificed in the defence of the Great Island of Crete from the

German occupiers, in 1941, now dominates.

In addition to His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, the ceremony was attended by the Governor of Western Australia His Excellency Mr. Christopher Dawson, the Premier of Western Australia Mr. Roger Cook, the Ambassador of Greece to Australia, His Excellency Mr. Stavros Venizelos, many representatives of the political and Army Authorities, Senators, members of Parliament, His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Kyanea, Archiepiscopal Vicar of Perth, Vice-Admiral Mr. Christos Sasiakos, Deputy Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff (ΓΕΕΘΑ), head of a delegation of the National Defence Staff executives, Mr. Emmanuel Mountakis, President of the Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand, Mr. Bill Evangel, President of the Greek Branch of the Veterans Association (RSL) of Western Australia and Chairman of the Battle of Crete Memorial Committee, Mr. Arthur Leggett, a Battle of Crete Veteran, the only surviving Veteran in Western Australia, as well as Mr. Richard Sandover, nephew of the late Major Ray Sandover, later Brigadier, who was Commander of the 2nd/11th Battalion of the ANZACs, who served and fought in Crete.

Archbishop Makarios, who was declared Patron – Guardian of the Memorial by the Organising Committee, together with Mr. Richard Sandover, emotionally expressed his gratitude to those who, 83 years ago, fought and shed their blood on the soil of his homeland of Crete. Noting the pivotal role that the Battle of Crete played in the overall outcome of the Second World War, he pointed out that “it was a battle where the forces of freedom collided with the forces of tyranny”. “We pledge to never forget the lessons our forefathers taught us,” he stressed at another point, “and we vow to uphold the values they fought for.”



“The hills and valleys of Crete witnessed acts of heroism,” the Archbishop also noted, making special mention of the courage and bravery shown by the legendary ANZACs and, in particular, the members of the Western Australian Expeditionary Force. His Eminence praised the fact that the Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought with a spirit of self-sacrifice on the side of the Cretans, while he recalled that many of those who remained on the island after the operation to evacuate the allied forces were protected by its inhabitants, as well as by clergy and monks. In this common struggle, as he pointed out, bonds of friendship and solidarity were forged that have endured over time.

Furthermore, His Eminence congratulated the Smith Sculptors group for the artistry of the monument, while for their contribution to the implementation of the initiative he warmly thanked the WA State Government, the President Mr. Bill Evangel and the members of the Battle of Crete Memorial Committee, as well as the donors and Mr. Richard Sandover. He also welcomed the presence of the last, 105-year-old veteran of the Battle of Crete, Mr. Arthur Leggett, with whom he had a cordial conversation after the conclusion of the ceremony.




GREEK CITY TIMES









vema.com.au