12/06/2024

Archbishop Makarios of Australia: “The Patriarch is great not in age, but in spirit, values, gifts and his many contributions”



With due ecclesiastical splendour and magnificence, on Monday, 10 June 2024, in the evening, at the celebrating Holy Monastery of “Axion Esti” in Northcote, Victoria, the Great Hierarchical Vespers were celebrated on the occasion of the Synaxis of Our Lady “Axion Esti” and the memory of the Holy Glorious Apostles Bartholomew and Barnabas. The Vespers Service was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, who was joined by His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis, His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope, His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Kerasounta and His Grace Bishop Bartholomew of Charioupolis.

The attendance of faithful believers, from the city of Melbourne and from other regions of the State of Victoria, was overwhelming and moving, while they reverently venerated the icon of the Mother of God and prayed together with a warm heart for His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who celebrates his Name Day.

Among the faithful who had gathered for the Vespers were, the Consul General of Greece in Melbourne, Mr. Emmanuel Kakavelakis, the Greek-Australian Federal Member of Parliament Ms. Maria Vamvakinou MP, the President of the Intercommunities Council of Victoria Mr. Tony Tsourdalakis, the President of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne Mr. Bill Papastergiadis, and the brother of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Mr. Nikolaos Archontonis, with his wife, Katerina, among many other guests.



At the conclusion of the Vespers Service, Archbishop Makarios succinctly presented the history of the miraculous icon “Axion Esti”, describing the miracle of the Archangel Gabriel on Mount Athos. Then, after briefly referring to the lives and activities of the honoured Apostles, Bartholomew and Barnabas, he asked the faithful to noetically transport themselves to the venerable Centre of Orthodoxy, to join in the joy of the Ecumenical Patriarch who celebrates his patronal feast day. Speaking with great respect and gratitude for the person of His All-Holiness, he noted, among other things, that “God has blessed us, because for about 33 years a great Patriarch has been standing on the first throne of the Orthodox Church. Great

not in age, but in spirit. Our Patriarch is great in values, gifts and contributions".

At another point, emphasising the strong spiritual ties of the plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia with the First of Orthodoxy, he pointed out that "the Ecumenical Patriarch is our father". "This is what the Patriarch is for the Greeks, this is what he is for our expatriates and for the entire flock of our Holy Archdiocese", he underlined. He then asked everyone present to join their prayers and ask God to grant His All-Holiness many more years, "to stand with all his strength, with a pure heart and a pure mind, and to minister to the glory of Christ and His Holy and Great Church".



In conclusion, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, congratulated His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Kerasounta as well as Fr. Phillip Papagiannopoulos, for the organisation of the Feast Day and for their ministry in general. His Eminence also warmly welcomed Fr. Varsanoufios, a monk of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Konstamonitou Monastery, on Mount Athos, who was born and raised in Melbourne. Finally, he congratulated and thanked the chanters who perfectly rendered the hymns of the Vespers Service, while he did not hide his excitement at the fact that the Australian Byzantine School of Music, which he founded a few months after taking up his duties, has already borne rich fruits. "One of the many anxieties I used to have was, what will happen to our chanting stands?. But now, when I see so many young and talented chanters, I don't have such anxieties and

thoughts,” he said characteristically.

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