03/07/2024

50th Anniversary of Cyprus Invasion Panel Discussion at 2024 Clergy-Laity Congress



2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. At today's panel discussion, leaders of the Cypriot American community offered their reflections on the island's tragic history, as well as the strategic plans available for a freer future. Patriarchal Representative His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain and His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America attended the panel. Led by Archdiocesan Director of Communications Stratos Safioleas, the panel discussion took place in the main ballroom area, where a moving video testimonial from survivors of the invasion— as well as the loved ones of those still missing— was projected.

Stavros Kamilaris, the President of the Lampousa Cypriot American Association. shared harrowing experiences from his time serving in the Cypriot Special Forces— as a nineteen year old— during the 1974 invasion. Archon and AHEPA Supreme President Savas Tsivicos stressed the importance of understanding Cyprus as part of the Hellenic world, while Michael's Firillas, the Consul General of Cyprus in New York, echoed the sentiment: "Hellenism has no choice," he said. What would it mean if Hellenism in Cyprus was lost? What would it mean for history and what, he insisted, would it mean for Greece?

During the Q&A, a number of attendees raised the question of how best to

communicate the complexities, as well as the enduring relevance, of the “Cyprus problem” both to those within the Greek and Cypriot communities and to their elected officials. Getting involved with Cypriot advocacy groups, like FCAO and NEPOMAK, is one way, but so is direct democracy, suggested Tsivicos. Speaking with local representatives at local events, like parish festivities or Greek festivals is an excellent opportunity to introduce them to the issue.

Photos: GOARCH/Brittainy Newman.

goarch.org