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Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “We raise our voices and pray for the prevalence of peace and justice”



In a solemn atmosphere, the great Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ was celebrated on Prinkipo, where His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presided on Tuesday, 6 August 2024, during the Divine Liturgy held at the Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ on the island, which this year celebrates the 300th anniversary of its re-establishment and complete renovation.

A representative of His Beatitude Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan of the Armenians in Turkey was present, along with a group of Archons of the Ecumenical Throne, youth from the United States, and a large number of faithful.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Ecumenical Patriarch blessed the grapes, following tradition, and distributed them to the faithful after the dismissal. He then performed a Trisagion service for the repose of the soul of the Great Benefactor of

the Nation, Symeon Siniosoglou, at his grave located next to the church.

Following this, during a reception held in the courtyard, Mrs. Maria Apostolidou, President of the Board of Directors of the Children's Home and the Working Girl's Shelter, and Archon Primikirios Mr. Adamantios Kombopoulos, Director of the Camp, warmly welcomed the Patriarch. The Mayor of the Princes' Islands (Adalar), Mr. Ali Ercan Akpolat, who had earlier attended the Divine Liturgy, also addressed the gathering.

In his speech, the Ecumenical Patriarch referred to this year's anniversary of the Monastery and briefly to its history.

"The nearly thousand-year history of the Monastery is intertwined with that of Prinkipo Island, which gradually came under the exclusive ownership of the Monastery until the early 19th century. The journey of this Patriarchal Stavropegion has thus been inextricably linked with the fortunes of the Holy Great Church of Christ and our Nation, as well as more broadly, as evidenced by the successive changes in the use of the Monastery.

What should we mention first? The desire of the great Patriarch Joachim III, during his first patriarchy, to establish a home for the elderly clergy of the Most Holy Archdiocese of Constantinople and the hierarchs of the Throne's local hierarchy in the Monastery's premises? This pioneering goal, an expression of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's care for the end of life of its serving clergy of all ranks, unfortunately, was never achieved, and the building constructed for this purpose housed the students of the Halki Theological School during the academic year 1895-1896, until their relocation to the newly built school building after the devastating earthquake that struck the area.

The Monastery's operation as a girls' orphanage during the second patriarchy of Joachim III, for eight years (1906-1914), following the generous donation of the Great Benefactor of the Nation, Symeon Siniosoglou, for the repose of whose soul we performed the Trisagion earlier, as we do every year, at his tomb near the Monastery's entrance? The subsequent installation of a unit of the Turkish army here during the first three years of World War I, and then the transfer of the Boys' Orphanage from Prinkipo here in the last year of the war due to the military unit's relocation to the building of the Prinkipo Orphanage? The provision of asylum and residence to hundreds of our Russian brothers and sisters who flooded the Queen of Cities as refugees after the outbreak of the October Revolution? The loving heart of the Mother Church of Constantinople cared for the distressed children from Russia from the very first moment, who, upon their arrival here, found not only

shelter but also the necessary care and support with food and essential items during their critical period of adaptation far from their homeland. The use of the Monastery as a hospitality venue, mainly for Russian girls, ended in 1925 with the appointment of our compatriot Kyrillos Agapios of Imbros as abbot, due, unfortunately, to an attempt by some Russian refugees to appropriate the Monastery.

Despite the successive changes in the use of the Monastery's facilities, its leading role in serving the various needs of not only the Greeks of Constantinople but also of the temporarily or permanently residing Orthodox flock of the Ecumenical Patriarchate here, and especially the youth, remained constant over these three centuries. This is evidenced by the successive installations in the Monastery of the Holy Theological School, the orphanages for girls and boys, and the Russian girls. Perhaps this is why the transfer of the Patriarchal Children's Camp here in 1952 from Prinkipo, and a decade later the Working Girl's Shelter, under the care of our late predecessor Patriarch Athenagoras, an expression of his paternal love for the young generation, the hope of tomorrow, was considered a natural development.

We continue with all our hearts to bless and protect the Children's Camp, not only because we recognise the inalienable right of our youth to spend some days of rest and recreation in this idyllic place after a strenuous school year but also because it is an excellent opportunity for all the children of the Constantinople Community to meet and interact with each other and with their Orthodox brethren from other local Orthodox Churches, such as those of Romania and Ukraine.

We take the opportunity of the historic three-hundredth anniversary of the re-establishment of our celebrating Monastery to offer a prayer to our Lord to rest the souls of our late predecessors and other late hierarchs, clergy, and laity who contributed with toil and sacrifice to the preservation and advancement of the sacred interests of this Monastery. May their memory be eternal!"



He then congratulated and thanked all those who work and strive for the hospitality of the Community's children, specifically the Camp Director and the Board of the Children's Home, the volunteers, especially the attending members of the dance group of the Folklore – Cultural Association of Markopoulo and Porto Rafti "Delios Apollo," led by the esteemed Mr. Konstantinos Dimopoulos, Assistant Professor at the University of Athens, and the music ensemble of the Holy Metropolis of Alexandroupolis, as well as all the named and anonymous donors who support the operation of the Patriarchal camp.

"Precisely this spirit of self-sacrifice embodies the tradition of service, following the example of our Lord, that the Holy Great Church of Christ has been continuing for centuries, great in its humility, and great because it did not covet the glory of this world, the glory of men, but the glory of God, who, condescending to the human race, became himself a man, a baby in Bethlehem, and later the Crucified One on Golgotha. This is the secret of the Mother Church's perpetual life: it is the spirit of service that characterises and directs all her thoughts, actions, and visions."

Addressing the children, the Patriarch assured them that he is always by their side and urged them to stay close to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and remain in the City of Constantinople.

“Your spiritual father and Patriarch could not but be with you today. We are always close to you. We are deeply concerned about your progress and future. You are the ones who will later take the reins of Romiosini and our Nation to continue their historical course in the blessed Queen of Cities, here where Divine Providence has placed us. Stay close to our Ecumenical Patriarchate and your Patriarch! Stay here in the City of our dreams. Surely better days will come! Your Patriarch hears your search for a proper orientation. He hears your anguished cry for a transformed world, without wars, where peace will prevail. It is the same cry of pain and despair from your peers in the war-torn Middle East and troubled Ukraine. At this moment, we look you in the eye and apologise for our failure to meet your expectations. Yet, together with you, we raise our voices and pray to the Lord of mercy for the immediate cessation of wars and the prevalence of peace and justice. We assure you that the Church of Constantinople, the supreme institution of Orthodoxy and our Nation, wishes, desires, and works continuously so that the world may be transformed in Christ and our earth may become the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom of goodwill, goodness, and peace.”



His All-Holiness then welcomed the group of pilgrims from the USA, who were visiting Constantinople as part of a program under the auspices of the Order of St. Andrew’s Archons to strengthen the ties of the American Community’s youth with the revered Centre of the Mother Church. This year, for the second consecutive year, about fifteen young people, accompanied by Archon Offikialioi, are in the

Queen of Cities for a week and will visit shrines and historical sites of Romiosyne, and will be received by the Ecumenical Patriarch at the Phanar.

At the end of his speech, the Patriarch warmly welcomed the Mayor of the Princes' Islands and the President of Prinkipo, thanking them for their care and interest in the affairs of the Greek Community.

This was followed by a festive event starring the children of the camp, who sang and danced traditional songs and dances, receiving enthusiastic applause from the attendees.



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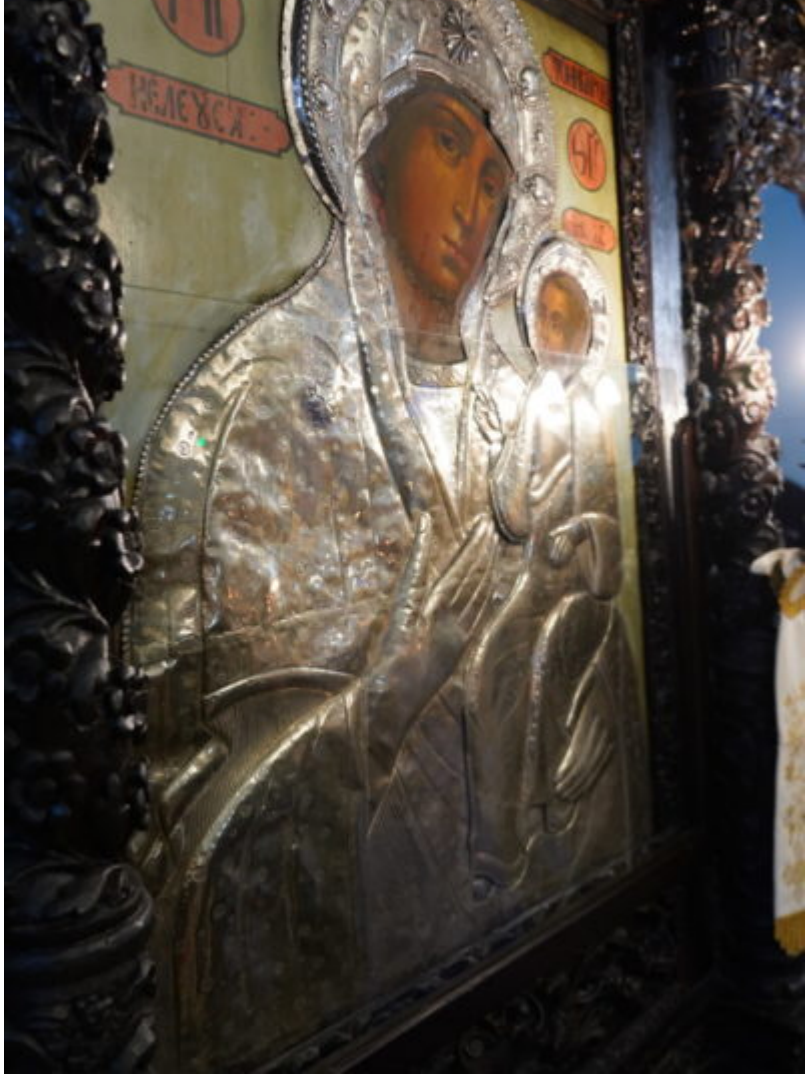






































































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