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“Welcome to your home” – A magnificent reception for the Ecumenical Patriarch in Sydney



On Friday evening 4th October, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew arrived at Sydney International Airport as part of his official visit to Australia, where he will preside over the centennial celebrations of this significant province of the Ecumenical Throne in the fifth continent. The airport was filled early with Orthodox Christians and Australian citizens of all ages, their eyes reflecting the fervent desire of their souls to greet the First of Orthodoxy and their spiritual father.

Leading the holy clergy and the Christ-loving laity was His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia surrounded by Their Graces, members of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia. Among the dignitaries participating in the grand reception of the Ecumenical Patriarch at the airport were Australia’s Minister for Immigration, Mr Matt Thistlethwaite, representing the Federal Prime Minister, Mr Anthony Albanese, and NSW Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Work Health and Safety, Ms Sophie Cotsis, representing State Premier, Mr Chris Minns. It is noteworthy that the presence of representatives from both Greek and Australian media was particularly strong, a testament to the importance of the historic visit of the Primate of the Orthodox Church to the country.

As His All-Holiness and honourable entourage arrived, the assembled faithful expressed their enthusiastic emotions, with many unable to hold back tears of joy and emotion. With one voice and one heart, all chanted the “Pheme” of the Ecumenical Patriarch, while young Greek children dressed in traditional costumes presented him with flowers.



Filled with feelings of joy and filial emotion, Archbishop Makarios warmly welcomed His All-Holiness “to his home”, initially focusing on the historical significance of the moment as well as the blessing being experienced by the Christian flock of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, which is celebrating the centenary since the establishment of the local Church with “one of the most globally recognised and charismatic religious leaders of our time”. “It is difficult to describe what makes a leader, especially today when there is confusion between a leader and a manager. In the person of Patriarch Bartholomew, however, the role of a leader becomes meaningful and is embodied in its highest and most God-pleasing form,” His Eminence remarked, among other things.

“On behalf of everyone, I welcome You to beautiful Australia, the land of contrasts but also of harmony, the country with the most differences but also the most similarities with other peoples,” Archbishop Makarios continued in his address. “Welcome to a place that is rightly called a mosaic of cultures, languages, and beliefs. Welcome to the fifth continent, an integral part of which is the Greek Orthodox faith and tradition, which has flourished and is bearing spiritual fruit, which I am sure you will have the opportunity to enjoy during this blessed apostolic visit of Yours. I welcome You and hope that what you see and experience during

your stay in the most beautiful country in the world will bring you joy and satisfaction and be indelibly etched in your memory and heart, just as, be assured, the blessed moments of Your presence here will be indelibly etched in the memory and hearts of our people. Your Holiness, we love You very much. Welcome to Australia. Welcome to Your home."



"Today, under the Southern Cross, one of my deepest desires, nurtured for almost 30 years – to see the Orthodox faithful of Australia, whom I love and have missed very much – has been fulfilled," responded the visibly emotional Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. "Not a day has passed without me praying for your progress and spiritual well-being," he added, and continued: "Australia may be geographically the most distant province from the Sacred Centre, yet you remain closer than ever to my heart."

His All-Holiness also referred to the centenary of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, expressing gratitude to the pioneering immigrants who sowed the seeds of the Holy Gospel in the fifth continent, which they brought from their homelands, while also making special mention of his visionary predecessor, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory VII who, in 1924, "laid the foundations for the flourishing Orthodox community we see today". With grateful words, he also referred to the blessed land of Australia, which provided fertile ground for the cultivation and blossoming of Orthodoxy.



The warm and inspired response of the Ecumenical Patriarch further included his paternal exhortation “to courageously pass on to our beloved youth the light of Christ’s love, illuminating the path for future generations and promoting a world where faith, hope, and Christian love reign”. Such a world, he noted, cannot be without peace, hence his closing remark: “Looking at the faces of the multitude gathered here today, we see the reflection of God’s love in your warm welcome. This is vivid confirmation that we are all created in the image and likeness of our Creator, called to live in harmony and peace. This is something we are all called to do, but it is most important that we remember this as we pray for peace among all people who are currently at war in Ukraine and the Middle East. Your pious souls, your harmonious and peaceful coexistence here, are traits that we admire from afar and take pride in. They are a profound testimony of your devotion to the Mother Church of Constantinople, to our Ecumenical Patriarchate”.

The Patriarchal Entourage consists of Their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imbros and Tenedos, and Metropolitan Filotheos of Thessaloniki, The Grand Protosyncellus Archimandrite Gregorios and the Grand Ecclesiarch Archimandrite Aetios, Director of the Personal Patriarchal Office, Patriarchal Deacon Evlogios, Codifier of the Holy and Sacred Synod, the Nun Iakovi, Abbess of the Holy Hermitage of the Holy Forerunner in Akritochori, Archon Didaskalos of the Nation Mr Konstantinos Delikostanis, Director of the First Patriarchal Office, and Archon Didaskalos of the Church Mr Theodoros Yiangou, Professor of the Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and Mr Nicholas-George Papachristou, Director of the Patriarchal Press and Communication Office, Mr Themistoklis Karanikolas, an employee of the Patriarchate, and Mr Christos

Archontonis, nephew of His All Holiness






7
8
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12
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