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“Your All-Holiness, we love you” – Emotional welcome for the Patriarch at the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Kogarah



The 9th of October, 2024 was etched in the memories of the devout faithful of the Parish–Community of the Resurrection of Christ, in the Sydney suburb of Kogarah, as a historic and unforgettable day. On this day, they had the joy and blessing of welcoming the Primate of the Orthodox Church, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The magnificent church had been adorned early for the celebration, and leading the enthusiastic welcome were the youth of the Greek Orthodox Parish of Kogarah.

“Your All-Holiness, we love you” was the message that greeted the Patriarch upon his arrival – formed by letters on the shirts of Greek children, who were lined up side by side on the church steps. The same message was echoed in the smiling – and at times emotional – faces of young and old alike, who had gathered to meet him, to greet him, and to receive his blessing.

After the national anthems of Australia and Greece were performed by a student band and choir, His All-Holiness delivered a heartfelt address from a platform in front of the Church of the Resurrection. He began emotionally recalling his previous

visit to the Parish of Kogarah 28 years ago, and praised God for granting him the opportunity to return to a place where the “heart” of Hellenism and Orthodoxy beats strongly. He focussed on the devotion to Greek Orthodox traditions by the immigrants who settled in Kogarah, Sydney, from the mid-20th century onward, creating a thriving community. “A cornerstone of this flourishing community,” he noted, “was – and continues to be – the Greek Orthodox Church of the Resurrection of our Lord, which played a crucial role in maintaining a cultural connection to the homeland and cultivating a sense of belonging among the Greek Orthodox faithful.”



The Ecumenical Patriarch did not fail to mention the contribution of the Parish of the Resurrection of Christ to the broader society, through its active involvement in charitable works, its support of schools and hospitals, its engagement in other community initiatives, and its cultural outreach to people from different backgrounds. Taking this opportunity, he highlighted the important mission of the Orthodox Church in the modern world, as outlined in the documents of the Holy and Great Council of Crete in 2016. Reminding that the Orthodox Churches, during the historic Council of Crete, addressed many of the challenges of our time, including racism, poverty, and the growing economic inequality, he stressed that “the mission of the Church must be to work for the strengthening of solidarity and fraternity.” He concluded with the wish that “the Church of the Resurrection of our Lord, here in Kogarah, may also be a ‘meeting place,’ where we gather to become the one body of Christ. United in this way, may we be strengthened to go out into society with this mission, for the good of humanity and the world at large. May the Church be a symbol and instrument of this hope. May it be a symbol and instrument of the vision for a culture of sharing and offering, of existence as co-

existence, and of life as communion.”

After concluding his speech, His All-Holiness proudly watched the youth of the Parish–Community, who performed and sang songs in his honour. He then entered the church, deeply moved, accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the Parish Priest, His Grace Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, and the President of the Parish–Community, Mr Nicholas Varvaris. His Grace Bishop Christodoulos addressed the Patriarch with words of filial love, respect, and gratitude on behalf of all, while the Patriarch, in response, once again recalled memories of his visit to Kogarah in 1996, commemorated the humble personality of Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, later canonised as a Saint of the Orthodox Church and Patron of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, and referred to the 70 saints who were added to the Church’s calendar during his Patriarchy, speaking of God’s blessing and the enrichment of our tradition and spirituality.



The Patriarchal visit to the Parish – Community of the Resurrection of Christ was attended by, among others, Their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imvros and Tenedos, and Metropolitan Filotheos of Thessaloniki, the Very Reverend Grand Protosyncellus Archimandrite Gregory, and the Grand Ecclesiarch Archimandrite Aetios, Director of the Patriarchal Private Office, the Reverend Patriarchal Deacon Evlogios, Codifier of the Holy and Sacred Synod, the Righteous Nun Iakovi, Abbess of the Holy Monastery of St John the Baptist in Akritochori, the Honourable Archon Teacher of the Nation Mr Konstantinos Delikostantis, Director of the First Patriarchal Office, and the Honourable Archon Teacher of the Church Mr Theodoros Yiangou, Professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the Honourable Mr Nicholas-George Papachristou, Director of the Patriarchal Press and

Communication Office, and the Honourable Mr Themistocles Karanikolas, from the Patriarchal staff as well as the God loving Bishops and many clergy of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia.






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