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The Ecumenical Patriarch in the “embrace” of his compatriots, the Imbrians of Sydney



“We are delighted and commend the Imbrians of Australia because, despite the hardships and persecution, they have prospered and progressed, bringing to their new homeland the culture, nobility, ethos, and piety of Romiosini, along with the treasures of faith, which they now pass on with the fear of God to the younger generations.”

With heartfelt words, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew addressed his compatriots, the Imbrians of Sydney and New South Wales, during a dinner held in his honour on the evening of Friday, 11th October. The convivial event took place in the hall of the Parish-Community of Saint Euphemia, in the suburb of Bankstown, Sydney. Upon his arrival at the church bearing the same name, the Patriarch was greeted by the youth of the Parish-Community, who offered him a bouquet of flowers and sang the traditional hymn of many years for him. Initially, the Patriarch accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, entered the church where he venerated the holy icon of Saint Euphemia the Great

Martyr and a fragment of her relic from the Phanar that was gifted by the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras a few years after the Parish-Community's founding in the 1960s.

Afterward, His All-Holiness Bartholomew proceeded to the community hall, where he was welcomed by Mr Marinos Paronis, President of the Imbrian Association of Sydney and New South Wales, and a large crowd of expatriate Imbrians. The event, coordinated by Father Panagiotis Mavrommatis, began with a presentation of Greek traditional dances in honour of the Patriarch. In continuation, greetings were delivered by Mr.Chris Spyropoulos, President of the Parish-Community of Saint Euphemia, Mr Nicholas Madouris on behalf of the Imbrian Association, and Mrs Eleni Chrysostomidou, President of the Association of Greeks from Constantinople and Asia Minor of NSW. Notably, Mr Spyropoulos and Mr Madouris announced donations of $10,000 and $5,000, respectively, to support the operation of the Greek schools in Imbros.



With great emotion, the Ecumenical Patriarch spoke about the "special blessing" of the reopening of the Greek schools, after nearly half a century, proudly stating that for the first time in the island's history, a high school is operating and that overall, the number of students this school year exceeds 50. He also expressed his paternal concern for the youth of the Imbrian Diaspora, emphasising the need for them to be initiated into the Imbrian spirit, the customs, traditions, and ethos of their ancestors. "We urge you all," he stressed, "to continue the good fight for the

preservation of the heritage of Romiosi the faith, the language, the ethos, and the memory of Imbros.” At the same time, he urged his compatriots to remain close to the Church, “the spiritual mother and nurturer of our Nation,” while praising their Shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios. “I know that you have loved him with all your heart because he first loved you,” he remarked, among other things.

Finally, the Patriarch expressed his deep emotion at having the opportunity to visit St Euphemia in Sydney for the second time, after 28 years, as well as to reunite with his compatriots living in this distant land. He concluded his address with an exhortation and invitation: “Keep coming back to the Phanar whenever you have the chance, and return to our Imbros because your presence there will show in practice that you do not forget it. Come and encourage your children to come, so they can connect with their place of origin.” He then handed the floor to His Eminence Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imbros and Tenedos and Mr Konstantinos Delikostantis, an Archon Teacher of the Nation and Director of the First Patriarchal Office, who hails from the island. He also introduced to the attendees Mr Themistoklis Karanikolas, a native of Imbros and an employee of the Patriarchate.



Besides the aforementioned individuals, members of the Patriarchal entourage attended the dinner, including His Eminence Metropolitan Philotheos of Thessaloniki, the Very Reverends Grand Protosyncellus Archimandrite Gregory and Grand Ecclesiarch Archimandrite Aetios, Director of the Personal Patriarchal 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, as well as Their Eminences, Metropolitan Ezekiel of Dervis and Metropolitan Seraphim of Sevasteia, Their Graces, Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and the Consul General of




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