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Address by Presbytera Patricia Scoutas to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew



A warm address was delivered by Presbytera Patricia Scoutas to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at a Dinner held in His honour held last Wednesday on behalf of the Clergy and Presbyteres of Sydney, Canberra and regional New South Wales at Kogarah in Sydney. During her address she extolled the Patriarch's leading role, on a global level, in the defence of peace and the protection of the natural environment, but also in support of the position of women in the Church.

Presbytera Patricia is the wife of Father Steven Scoutas, the Presiding Priest at St Spyridon Church in Kingsford, Sydney. Together they have served the Orthodox Church of Australia for half a century, firstly in Brisbane, then in Sydney; just as their late parents did and just as they have inspired their children to do.

Undoubtedly, Presbytera Patricia was a most suitable person appointed to welcome the Ecumenical Patriarch to the Dinner, on behalf of the Presbyteres present. An additional reason for her selection was the fact that she had collaborated with the

Ecumenical Patriarch from the 7th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1991 until 2000 on the Central Committee of the WCC. During her address, she reminisced about that blessed period, recalling with great emotion her first meeting with His All Holiness, in January of 1991 in Canberra when, as Metropolitan of Chalcedon at the time, he had led the delegation of the Orthodox Church to the General Assembly of the WCC. “To this day, I vividly remember Your impressive presence that exuded great confidence,” she said, among other things.



In continuation, Presbytera Patricia referred to her election to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and to a conclusion she reached from her ten-year term there. “I observed that Orthodox wives were criticized for ‘hiding behind the robes of their priestly husbands,’” she noted, appraising that this is a misunderstanding which is preserved to this day. She countered with satisfaction, however, that Patriarch Bartholomew is one who constantly promotes the vital role of women in the Orthodox Church. “We humbly pray and hope,” she added, “that, as we begin the next chapter of our history in this blessed land of Australia, women will be more recognized and included in vital roles of ministry.”

Focusing on other aspects of the unique personality and work of the Ecumenical Patriarch, she noted his initiatives for the support of religious freedom and human rights, having established the Office to combat human trafficking and contemporary slavery, for the prevalence of peace and reconciliation in humanity, and for the sanctity of the environment.

Furthermore, she emphasized that the presence of the “First of Orthodoxy” at the centenary celebrations of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia is a great honour, not

only for the present generations of our Australian-born faithful, but also for our immigrant forebears who reverently erected Churches during the previous one hundred years. “Our people are overjoyed for your presence here, Your All Holiness, which will forever be recorded in the history and in the heart of Orthodoxy in Australia,” she noted, among other things.



In conclusion, Presbytera Patricia referred, with words of respect and appreciation, to the Primate of the local Church, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, noting that “he has united the reverend Clergy and the devout faithful with his genuine love for all people, and with the warmth that emanates from his soul.” Invoking her long experience, she assessed that the Holy Archdiocese, as a family, under the secure protection of the Mother Church of Constantinople, is indeed “ready for the future”, as declared by the delegates of the 12th Clergy Laity Congress, held in September 2023 at St Spyridon Parish in Sydney.

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