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The Ecumenical Patriarch at the Church of St Eustathios, Melbourne



In an atmosphere of spiritual joy and enthusiasm, and yet also emotionally charged, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew visited the Archdiocesan Holy Church of St Eustathios, the seat of the Holy Diocese of Melbourne, on Monday, 14th October. Upon the arrival of His All-Holiness, the church bells rang joyfully, while a large number of faithful gathered at the church entrance, including students of the Greek Orthodox school Oakleigh Grammar. The students greeted him by holding a banner with a message of welcome, singing in his honour, and showering him with rose petals.

Accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, His All-Holiness entered the Church of St Eustathios deeply moved, recalling his previous visit nearly three decades ago. He was welcomed by His Grace Bishop Kyriakos of Melbourne, while a heartfelt greeting was delivered by Fr Chris Dimolianis. “We welcome you with open hearts, eager to receive your blessings and be inspired by your words,” said Father Christ, adding: “Your presence gives us the impetus to continue Christ’s work in our lives, seeking holiness, loving one another, and living the Gospel both in word and deed.” He concluded by saying, “As you honour us with your presence, we remember that, though distances may separate us, we are

united in the body of Christ.”

In his response, the Ecumenical Patriarch, noting that His Grace Bishop Kyriakos hails from the monastic brotherhood of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos, expressed his satisfaction with the ongoing spiritual connection between the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and the “Garden of the Virgin Mary.” This connection was further solidified by the proclamation of St Paisios of Mount Athos as Patron Saint of the local Church and of Australia. His All-Holiness also praised Their Eminences, Metropolitans Ezekiel of Dervis and Seraphim of Sevasteia, acknowledging their many years of ministry and contribution to the Greek Orthodox faithful of the fifth continent and their devotion to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Finally, he expressed his firm belief that under the “enlightened leadership of Archbishop Makarios,” with the newly established Holy Eparchial Synod and its new Constitution, the Holy Archdiocese of Australia holds bright prospects for the future.



An official luncheon followed, hosted by His Grace Bishop Kyriakos of Melbourne, during which His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his happiness at being in Melbourne, in a place “where the tree of Romiosini has acquired deep roots and borne rich and abundant fruits, hence it is, we would say, Greek land.” He also spoke with admiration about the identity of the Australian city calling it a “colourful canvas of peoples and cultures” and focusing on the element of ecumenism (universality) which it shares with the Great Church of Christ emphasising, however, that obviously “ecumenism does not mean the diminishing or loss of identity and the unique characteristics, or the uniqueness of each people, but it means understanding these, experiencing and developing them; far from

intolerance, nationalistic hatred, exclusions, and divisions." He concluded with a paternal exhortation to the Greek people: "Bear witness daily to the universality of Orthodoxy, hold as a priceless treasure our customs, traditions, and language, for these are the guarantees not only of the survival of the Diaspora but of its well-being and thriving, and of its spiritual presence and progress. Teach your children that a Romian is a citizen of the world, but one who never forgets his faith and language; his values, and his traditions."

During the Ecumenical Patriarch's visit to the Church of St Eustathios and the luncheon in his honour, apart from the aforementioned Hierarchs, also present were Their Eminences, Metropolitans Kyrillos of Imbros and Tenedos and Filotheos 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 Didaskalos of the Nation Mr Konstantinos Delikostantis, Director of the First Patriarchal Office, and the Honourable Archon Didaskalos of the Church Mr Theodoros Yiangou, Professor of the Theological School at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Honourable Mr Nicholas-George Papachristou, Director of the Patriarchal Press and Communication Office, and Mr Themistocles Karanikolas, from the Patriarchal staff; the Venerable God-loving Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and the clergy of the Holy Diocese of Melbourne, the Greek Ambassador to Australia, Mr Stavros Venizelos, the High Commissioner of Cyprus, Mr Antonis Sammoutis, the Consuls General of Greece in Melbourne, Mr Emmanuel Kakavelakis and in Adelaide, Ms Alexandra Theodoropoulos, Archons of the Great Church of Christ, the brother of His All-Holiness Mr Nikolaos Archontonis, and the parents of Archbishop Makarios of Australia, Emmanuel and Fotini Griniezakis.


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