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## **An important speech by the Ecumenical Patriarch at the packed Centrepiece in Melbourne**



“Remain until your last breath within the Holy Ark of the Orthodox Faith and in what you have received from our fathers.” With this paternal exhortation, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew concluded the important speech he delivered during the official dinner held in his honour in Melbourne, organised by the Holy Archdiocese of Australia.

The central theme of the Patriarchal speech was the importance of dialogue in the modern world, especially among Christian Churches and religions more broadly. At the outset, His All-Holiness praised Australian society, a society of freedom, opportunities, and prosperity, contrasting these conditions with the wars, hunger, injustices, and countless other sufferings afflicting people in other corners of the world. After briefly analysing the factors causing these afflictions, focusing on the “bottomless greed of human nature,” he emphasised that the Christian Churches “have a Gospel duty to raise a strong voice of protest.” However, as he noted, this voice is weakened due to divisions.

At this point, he recalled the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is a pioneer in the matter of dialogue and cited relevant initiatives by his predecessors, as well as an excerpt from the official documents of the Holy and Great Synod of Crete. He then stated that “the Orthodox Church, by its nature and constitution, desires and promotes dialogue, especially inter-Christian dialogue because it is the only way to approach, reconcile, and achieve the greatly longed for but still unattained unity.” “Whoever is hostile to dialogue, especially under the pretext of piety,” he continued, “is an enemy of Christ’s peace and falls into a grave sin. During our humble patriarchy, we have received countless insults and slanders for the cause of dialogue, but we do not waver, and we will continue to fight as long as God allows, without overlooking the many problems that arise.”

Focusing further on the divisions within the Orthodox Church, he referred to “excuses for sin” and stressed that “the only truth is the desire for primacy and the diminishing of the inalienable rights of the Ecumenical Throne and the disruption of the canonical order of the Church in the logic of unchecked ethnophyletism.”



The Ecumenical Patriarch concluded his speech with the assurance that “despite our personal unworthiness, mistakes, and human weaknesses, the Phanar watchmen and torchbearers of the sacred lighthouse of the Great Church, in collaboration with the local holy Hierarchs, and certainly with your esteemed shepherd, Archbishop Makarios of Australia, preserve the faith and tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church intact, unaltered, and without innovations, and we say this with a clear conscience and before the Lord.” “Have trust in the Great Church, which has safeguarded for centuries the holy and precious treasures of Romiosini, and do not listen to the foolish, senseless, and blasphemous voices of those who profane the All-Holy Body of the Lord, that is, our Holy Church,” he concluded.

Earlier, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia welcomed His All-Holiness, briefly describing the flourishing of Hellenism in Melbourne and candidly expressing the concern he felt when he took the helm of the local Church, a concern related to divisive phenomena in the Greek community of Melbourne. Also stressing the value of dialogue, he expressed satisfaction that “Melbourne today is a source of pride and refreshment for me and the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, as most of the obstacles of the past no longer exist, the rifts have been restored, past grievances have been forgotten, and the former love has been rekindled. The Orthodox faithful of Victoria constitute the largest population segment of our Archdiocese, and thus the restoration of unity and harmony has had and continues to have an

immeasurable positive impact on the entire Greek community. For this, we glorify the Holy Spirit for the precious gift of peace and reconciliation.”

The official dinner in honour of the Ecumenical Patriarch was hosted in the packed Centrepiece Hall at Melbourne Park, attended by approximately 1,500 Greek Australians. Present, among others, were members of the Patriarchal entourage consisting of: Their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imvros and Tenedos, and Metropolitan 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 as well as Their Eminences, Metropolitan Ezekiel of Dervis and Metropolitan Seraphim of Sevasteia, the Venerable God-loving Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, 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, the Federal MP Ms Maria Vamvakinou and Mr John Pesutto, Leader of the Opposition in the State of Victoria, Mr Jeff Kennett, former Premier of Victoria, Archons of the Great Church of Christ, the biological father of His All-Holiness Nikolaos Archontonis, and the parents of Archbishop Makarios of Australia, Emmanuel and Fotini Griniezas. The dinner was interspersed with a musical program, while the highlight of the evening was the cutting of a ceremonial cake by His All-Holiness, together with His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, for the centenary of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia.















