

## **“I am in heaven,” says Archbishop Makarios after receiving a Christ-like welcome at St John’s College - (VIDEOS + PHOTOS)**



Archbishop Makarios, the new primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia, will be in Melbourne until 15 August. His goal is to meet with as many parishioners, Greek schools and other community groups as possible.

The symbolism of Archbishop Makarios’ entry into St John’s College on Thursday was similar to Jesus Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Children lined up on the Olive Grove corridor waving their little Greek and Australian flags and throwing rose petals onto the entourage. There was pomp, pageantry and pandemonium as soft trembling voices yelled, ‘Axios!’ ‘Axios!’ (Always Worthy)

The archbishop took his time greeting his little friends, winning over young churchgoers with his huge smile and approachable nature. In fact, his first words upon his arrival was: “Where are the kids?”

An air of elation was evident as the students waited, happy to be out of their classes for the afternoon. “I’m so excited to see the archbishop up close. He’s more than just a man. He’s the archbishop of Australia and he’s very special!” Adina Demiras from Year 3K told Neos Kosmos.

Asked about how he can make church more appealing to young people, school captain Evangelia Iliadis told Neos Kosmos that his “presence” is what would make the difference. “He needs to speak to us himself, and that might make a difference,” she said. “Social media would help too.”

They were surprised upon hearing that the archbishop has an Instagram account that numbers 2,377 followers.

Junior captain Ilias Kapoulitsas suggested to “make church more fun”, while school captain Maria Pop said that social activities after church and youth days would be helpful.

On this day, there were no complaints. The children greeted the Archbishop as though he was a rock star.

Walking along a path strewn with rose petals he was taken to a robotics class, where he played with the children’s handiwork, promised to be back to create a robot as part of the group and wondered if he was in the presence of a young “Einstein”.

At the assembly hall, he enjoyed a specially prepared programme of songs and speeches, followed by an array of gifts including olives from the school’s own olive grove planted when Patriarch Bartholomew visited in 1996.

Addressing the crowd, he said that he felt as though he were in heaven. “At this moment I feel that I am not in earth but I am in heaven,” he said. “I felt that from the first moment that I entered this school. This is a message that came to my heart from God.”

He added: “This school will not close. This school has a great future.”

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**Read the press release of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia:**





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## PRESS RELEASE

*His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia, completed his first pastoral visit to St John's Greek Orthodox College (21-27 Railway Place, West Preston) on Thursday, 8 August 2019.*

On the occasion of his first pastoral visit to St John's College, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia expressed his deep joy and enthusiasm for the continued operation of the Greek Orthodox College; a School which has proven over time to be an exemplar institution equipping students not only with Hellenic education and ideals, but also the elements of the Orthodox faith for the benefit of the broader Australian community.

His Eminence was already aware of unsubstantiated rumours relating to the closing of the College. However, during his visit, the Archbishop assured everyone that the College will continue to operate; declaring his confidence that the school has a bright future ahead.

In the end, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios expressed his sincere wish that a close and fruitful collaboration with members of the College Board and everyone at the school community will assist in fulfilling the mission and goals of the school.

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