

Message of Archbishop Makarios of Australia on the anniversary of the 28th October 1940



With feelings of deep emotion and national pride, we commemorate today the glorious anniversary of 28 October 1940, that resounding “NO” with which the Greek people protested against the insolent ultimatums of their would-be conquerors.

A poor and tormented people, although they possessed meagre means of defence, nevertheless stood up to the powerful Italo-German Axis and defended, with single-mindedness, brave spirit and faith in God, the freedom of their homeland, democracy and human dignity.

Our ancestors, with their heroic example, invite us to reflect on the importance of patriotism and universal ideals, for which they fought and sacrificed during the Epic of the 1940’s, but also the greatness of our faith, which always encourages us,

strengthens us and shields our unity.

Living in an era with different conditions and stakes, our minimum duty towards them is to proclaim our own “NO” to oblivion, to the decline of principles and values, and to the attempt to relinquish the sacred traditions of our faith and our nation.

We say “no” to oblivion! We preserve and safeguard the historical memory, in order to transmit it intact to the future generations; so that our children know that they are descendants of heroes, feel pride, but also to be inspired by their virtues for their own choices and decisions. An additional reason for preserving historical memory especially by our Diaspora on the fifth continent, is the fact that in the struggle against the forces of fascism and Nazism, the Greek people met with the heroes of the ANZACs, the young men of Australia and New Zealand. It was there that another link was forged in the strong chain that connects our peoples to this day.

We also say “no” to the decline in principles and values! In a world where individualism is promoted, at the expense of solidarity and cooperation for the common good, this anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on how our ancestors refused to compromise their freedom and dignity, refused to settle for any concessions, refused to betray their traditional values and ideals. Their brave stance encourages us to fight against lack of freedom, totalitarianism, injustice and any kind of offence to human dignity with all the strength we possess.

And, thirdly, we say “no” to the abandonment of the sacred and holy things of our faith and our nation! Let’s not forget that today’s national anniversary coincides with a great feast day of Orthodoxy, the feast of the Holy Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos. This is because Our Lady was and is always present in the great difficulties and tribulations of our people, to strengthen and protect them, to give them courage and hope where everything seems unbearable and hopeless. Let us then emulate the piety of our ancestors, honouring the sacred person of the Mother of God, in defiance of those who protest the cutting off of the younger generations from the Church, the sacred traditions and the precious values of our faith.

With these thoughts in mind, I wish all Greek women and men a blessed celebration under the protection of the Virgin Mary, and heavenly strength for all of us, so that we may prove worthy of our ancestors in the challenges of our own time.

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