

## Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “Only progress and growth befits our Christians of Australia”



His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who returned on Saturday afternoon from a multi-day visit to Luxembourg and Belgium, officiated on Sunday, 17 November 2024, during the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, Panagia Balino, where there is a Sacred Spring dedicated to the Holy Great Martyr Menas. The Patriarch had conducted the opening ceremony of the renovated Church a year ago.

Also present for the Divine Liturgy were His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, His Grace Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus, Overseer of the Phanar - Golden Horn District, Archons of the Great Church of Christ, the Ambassador His Excellency Mr. Milton Nikolaidis, Director of the Diplomatic Office of the Prime Minister of Greece, and his brother Mr. Byron Nikolaidis, Founder and President of PeopleCert Group and Grand Benefactor of the Church, together with his family,

expatriate participants, as well as believers from the City and pilgrims from abroad.

The Holy Sermon was preached by the Patriarchal Deacon Father Evlogios Tsatsas, Codifier of the Holy and Sacred Synod.

In his address, after the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness emphasised, among other things, that we come to the “house of the Lord” both to be spiritually edified and to be taught.

“And when we say “to learn”, we don’t just mean to learn, but to live! Because the word of God in the Gospel is not only for us to hear and learn, as we hear every lesson and gain knowledge, but to experience what we hear. God’s word is life, as Christ himself says: “the words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life”.

It is well known what a young monk said to an elder ascetic: “Father, tell me a word so that I may live”. Not “tell me a word, so that I may learn”, but “so that I may live”. This is exactly what we neglect, especially in our time. We may want to listen, even to the preaching of the Church, but just to learn more about our faith, not to apply it in our lives. But knowledge alone does not save, but as the Apostle Paul says, without love, “knowledge is puffed up” (1 Cor. 8:1), it makes man proud and exaggerate his worth, because he knows certain things, little in comparison with those which he does not know.’

Then, after referring to the Gospel passage of the day, he emphasised:

“However, we consider that the real rest for our soul is found in the presence of God within it, in the observance of His commandments, in the openness to the neighbour, in the effort of spiritual ascesis, work and creation.

It is precisely for this respite from offering and duty that we wish to direct the praise and satisfaction of the Mother Church and ourselves personally to those listening and doing the commandments of the Gospel and the imperatives of the history of our Nation, that is, to all those who from the Overseer of your District, His Grace and dear brother Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus and those working with him who are responsible for the Community Bodies of Balino, led by the Honourable President of the Honourable Ecclesiastical Committee, Mr. Symeon Soltaridis, and even the youngest community member, they offer their services to the Community, each according to the talent given to them, so that it can continue its life and history, as far as possible less affected by external conditions and circumstances.

We thank you for the reverent reception and for the many expressions of respect

and affection towards our humble person. These events demonstrate how connected the community of the City is with the Mother Church and with its Shepherd, the Ecumenical Patriarch. And this bond of shepherd and flock sweetens our paternal heart and strengthens us in the performance of our sacred duties and obligations towards the Church and the Nation. The high see of the Ecumenical Patriarch cannot be understood without our humble ministry as Archbishop and shepherd of this City of Constantine.

From the height and responsibility of this Ecumenical Throne, overseeing the affairs of our Holy Archdiocese, we see and recognise the difficulties under which the multifarious and multifaceted work is carried out in it, as well as the labours and sacrifices of the most venerable clergy, the most honourable community leaders, the most distinguished teachers, and the noble ladies of beneficence and solidarity.

Even when the result of the efforts is not always what was expected, the Church rewards and praises more than the result, the intention, the motivation, the good and unselfish intention. And we have no doubt that the Church exists and that it guides the actions and doings of those who work for the common good, as well as in general all those who, out of good intentions and love for the needs of all, are consumed in the service of their neighbour, the Church and the community, as well as the benefactor and the donor of your Community, the Honourable Mr. Byron Nikolaïdos, to whom we express our heartfelt thanks of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Grant to Him O Lord, according to his heart and fulfill all his will."

After this, His All-Holiness expressed his joy at the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, "a distinguished Hierarch of the All-Venerable Ecumenical Throne, who, by divine grace, has been ministering faithfully, with vision and divine zeal, the great and most excellent Archdiocese of Australia for more than five years, which this year celebrates the centenary of its foundation".

The Patriarch referred to his recent visit to Australia, where he presided over the anniversary events in Sydney and Melbourne, and, on this occasion, once again expressed his warm thanks to His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the members of the Holy Eparchial Synod, and his co-workers, such as the Archdeacon of Archbishop Father Athinagoras Karakonstantakis who was also present, for the warm welcome and hospitality in Australia. "It was indeed an unforgettable missionary journey, which will always hold a special place in our hearts", said the Patriarch and addressing the Archbishop of Australia he said:

"Holy brother, We exhort you all to steadfastly continue, under your enlightened leadership, your collective course and journey forward and upward during the

second centenary of the life of the Holy Archdiocese. Taking steps backwards is not allowed, neither is standing still. Only progress and growth befits our Christians of Australia, who found themselves on this opposite side of the earth precisely to create a better future for themselves and their children. We ask you to assure them that the Mother Church will always be at their side, praying and doing everything necessary for their good, ready to respond to every just request and every reasonable supplication of theirs aimed at their edification and growth in Christ.

We thank you very much for making the effort of the long overseas journey to come and venerate the Great Church and to express your respect and love for the persons who serve the Church and the Nation here. We deeply appreciate your sacrifice and we urge you to start again your annual pilgrimages to the City of Constantine and to your ecclesiastical centre here, to receive and give, to give and receive strengthening, love, strength, faith, hope".

Concluding his address, His All-Holiness welcomed all the pilgrims from abroad and especially the groups from the Holy Church of Agia Irini in Galatsi, Athens, under the leadership of Archimandrite Titos Garefalakis, and from the Black Sea Club of Pontians in Serres, under the leadership of Ms. Ekaterini Georgiadou. "We thank you very much for your visit. The presence from time to time of children from abroad and especially from Greece in our midst strengthens us in our struggle to keep lit the candle of the All-Venerable Patriarchal Church and the other sacred sites of our Nation here, to keep the remaining heritage intact and to pass it on to future generations. Please pray that God will honour all of us here to respond to this high calling and mission which is heavy and responsible, but also extremely honourable", His All-Holiness noted.



His All-Holiness was also addressed with warm words by His Grace Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus and the President of the Ecclesiastical Committee.

Immediately after, the Patriarch unveiled a dedicatory wall plaque in the Narthex in honour of the Benefactors of the Church, and then, in the courtyard of the Church, a small sculpture in memory of eleven-year-old Angelos, from Ioannina, whom His All-Holiness had met and strengthened spiritually during the time of his hospitalisation in a clinic in Constantinople. In front of the sculpture, His All-Holiness performed a Trisagion Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of the young boy, who bravely fought against cancer, and offered his condolences to his parents who were present and joined in prayer.



































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