

## **Proclamation of the Ecumenical Patriarch as an Honorary Citizen of the Municipality of Sparta**



Immediately after the ceremony of lighting the sacred oil lamp in the newly built Church of Saint Ananias, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew made his way to the adjacent Administration Building of the Regional Unit of Laconia, where he initially had a ceremonial meeting with the Deputy Regional Governor of Laconia, Mr. Theodoros Veroutis, in his office, during which they exchanged symbolic gifts.

Subsequently, in the packed hall of the Laconian poets Yannis Ritsos & Nikiforos Vrettakos, the Ceremony of Proclamation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as an Honorary Citizen of the Municipality of Sparta took place.

The Ceremony began with a greeting from the Mayor of Sparta, Mr. Michael Vakalopoulos, who expressed his grateful thanks to His All-Holiness for his honorary presence in Sparta, which is a blessing and a source of joy, as well as for the honorary acceptance of the unanimous proposal of the Municipal Council to receive

the title of Honorary Citizen, thus sealing His historic visit to the region. The Mayor of Sparta described His All-Holiness as a “spiritual beacon”, while emphasising that as a leader of Orthodoxy, He leaves an indelible mark with His diverse activities and virtuous life.

The greeting was followed by the pronouncement of the honouree by the President of the Municipal Council, Mr. Stefanos Vrettakos, while audiovisual material was then shown on the blessed activity of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.



Immediately afterwards, the attendees rose, so that the President of the Municipal Council could read the resolution and the title of Honorary Decree. The Mayor of Sparta, Mr. Vakalopoulos, conferred on the Ecumenical Patriarch the title of Honorary Citizen of Sparta, presented Him with a commemorative plaque and offered Him symbolic gifts. His All-Holiness, on his part, offered the Mayor gifts of love and appreciation to his person.

In his speech, the Primate of the Holy Great Church of Christ initially warmly thanked the Mayor, the President and the members of the Municipal Council for the honorary distinction. He then pointed out that the identity of the Spartans is an expression of the harmonious combination of historical and geomorphological elements. At the same time, His All-Holiness referred to historical and spiritual figures of the blessed land of Lacedaemon, while characteristically stating: “Sparta

is an ideal that transcends nations and borders, it is a symbol of the Dorian spirit, of austerity and strength. In this sense, both as Christians and as people, we must be Spartans.” Continuing his speech, he promised to follow with keen interest the events taking place in the Municipality of Sparta, while emphasising that he would have Lacedaemon in his heart and would pray for its pious people. At the same time, he also asked the Laconians to include in their prayers, Christoupolis, Theotokoupolis and the Holy Capital City of the Nation, their Patriarch and the remaining Greek community.



The Ceremony concluded with a performance of songs in honour of His All-Holiness by the traditional choir of the “Petros the Lacedaemonian” School of Byzantine Music of the Holy Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta, under the direction of Professor Mr. Nikolaos Taprantzis.





























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