

Archbishop Makarios of Australia: “Let us rise up spiritually, to welcome Christ into our hearts”



On Sunday, 8 December, at the Church of Saint Paraskevi, in the Brisbane suburb of Taigum, a Tri-Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated, which was presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, and concelebrated by Their Graces, Bishop Bartholomew of Brisbane and Bishop Silouan of Adelaide, and by clergy from the city of Brisbane. A large number of devout believers attended, including the Honorary Consul-General of Greece in Brisbane, Mr. George Mastrocostas, the President of the Parish of Saint Paraskevi, Mr. Costa Stratikopoulos, and the youth who participated in the work of the Youth Conference of the Holy Diocese of Brisbane.

During the Divine Liturgy, the Archbishop preached the Holy Sermon with inspiration, analysing the Gospel reading of the day, which recounts the healing of the crippled woman by Christ. This is the miracle that the Lord performed in the synagogue, in favour of a disabled woman, who for eighteen years had been unable to straighten her body and stand up. “This seemingly simple miracle has

profound lessons for us,” His Eminence observed in his introduction, connecting the physical condition of the bent-over crippled woman with the spiritual condition of modern man. As he pointed out: “Her condition reflects the spiritual reality of many of us: bent over by the cares of life and unable to walk upright, in the freedom of God’s love. We may be weighed down by pride, anger, jealousy, or resentment—weights that prevent us from fully lifting our hearts before God. Like the woman in the Gospel, we too may feel trapped by the weight of these sins, unable to straighten ourselves out or move forward.”

However, “Christ is the one who can set us free,” the Archbishop was quick to remind us. The condition for Him to take on our burdens, he added, is that we turn to Him with humility and willingly admit that we need His help. Something which requires repentance!



Noting then that the Holy Fathers, not by chance, designated the reading of this particular Gospel passage in the midst of our period of spiritual preparation for the feast of Christmas, His Eminence emphasised that this is an invitation “to straighten ourselves spiritually, so that we may fully welcome Christ into our hearts.” “Christmas,” he continued, “is not simply a celebration of the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago. It is an invitation to encounter Him again in our lives. To do this, we must prepare ourselves through repentance, prayer, fasting, and works of love. We must examine our hearts and ask the questions: What are the burdens that keep us bent over? What sins prevent us from standing upright in the

presence of God? This period of preparation offers us the opportunity to place these burdens before the Lord, to listen to His call and to allow His healing touch to transform us.” “Let us not waste this precious time, but let us use it to draw closer to Christ,” the Archbishop concluded, assuring that “if we do so, then we will have accepted the message of Christmas.”

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence elevated Father Evangelos Aspiotis to Spiritual Father – Confessor, who serves in the Parish of Saint John the Baptist, in Cairns, North Queensland, a Parish of the Holy Diocese of Brisbane. His Eminence addressed paternal advice to Fr. Evangelos, urging him to try to relieve people of their burdens and guilt, while during his homily he referred with words of praise to the local Bishop, His Grace Bishop Bartholomew of Brisbane, as well as to His Grace Bishop Silouan of Adelaide, who was born and raised in Brisbane, and at the same

time, he mentioned the Parish Priest of the Parish of Saint Basil the Great, Fr. Athanasios, and General Mr. [unclear] n.









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