

## **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew attends inauguration of the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Smyrna**



On Sunday, 8 December 2024, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the newly inaugurated Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the official seat of the Holy Metropolis of Smyrna.

The historic church, originally built in the 17th century and dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Santa Maria), was granted to the Metropolis in 2023 by Pope Francis and the Franciscan Order following a request by the Ecumenical Patriarch. This gracious concession transformed the church into the Cathedral of the Orthodox Metropolis of Smyrna.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by prominent figures, including Archbishop Marek Solczyński, Vatican Nuncio to Turkey and Azerbaijan; Archbishop Martin Kmetec of Smyrna; a delegation of Franciscan monks from Rome led by John Wong, on behalf of the head of the Order, Devout Monk Massimo Fusarelli; the

Consuls General of Greece and Romania in Smyrna, Alexandros Konstas and Lilian Zamfiroiu; representatives of Smyrnaean associations from Greece; and many faithful from Smyrna and abroad.

In his homily, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew reflected on the historical and spiritual significance of the church, emphasising the generosity of Pope Francis and the Franciscan Brotherhood.



“Santa Maria of Smyrna has stood for three centuries and twenty-six years, rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 1688 that shook the city and claimed the life of its Metropolitan Ignatius of Smyrna. Throughout its history, this sacred space housed the Franciscan Order. Today, through the graciousness of Pope Francis, the first pontiff to bear the name of the order’s founder, and with the support of the Franciscan Brotherhood, it becomes a spiritual haven for the Orthodox faithful of this great city,” said the Patriarch.

He expressed profound gratitude for the gesture, noting that such acts “strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between us and send a powerful message of unity and Christian solidarity.”

The Patriarch also highlighted the importance of the church’s establishment as the Cathedral of the Metropolis of Smyrna under His Eminence Metropolitan Bartholomew of Smyrna.

“The Holy Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos will now serve as a place of prayer for the spiritual salvation of the faithful and the peace of the world. It will stand as a symbol of stability, unity, and divine grace, particularly in these challenging times,” he stated.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew extended his warm congratulations to Metropolitan Bartholomew of Smyrna for securing the Cathedral and praised his pastoral dedication. He encouraged the Metropolitan to continue his ministry with love and responsibility, under the protection of the Theotokos and the Saints of Smyrna.

The Patriarch expressed heartfelt thanks to key contributors who made the restoration and preparation of the church possible. Among them was Marianna Latsi, whose generous donation supported the maintenance of the church and its surrounding buildings. Additionally, Archon Epaminondas Pantazopoulos, was commended for donating the Church’s iconostasis. The Patriarch also acknowledged the efforts of all who contributed to the project, ensuring the church’s readiness for its new role.

The inauguration marked a momentous occasion for the Orthodox faithful of Smyrna, uniting history, faith, and ecumenical cooperation. The Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos now stands as a beacon of hope and unity, serving the spiritual needs of the Orthodox community and symbolising the enduring presence of Orthodoxy in the region.





























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