

The Four Holy New Martyrs of Rethymno, a spiritual bridge between Australia and Crete



© Alexandra Gionis

A splendid Poly-Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, was celebrated on Sunday, 15 December, at the filled Holy Monastery of Our Lady “Axion Esti”, headquarters of the Holy Diocese of Chora, in Melbourne. Concelebrating with the Archbishop were Their Eminences Metropolitan Myron of New Zealand, and Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymno and Avlopotamos, as well as Their Graces, Bishop Kyriakos of Melbourne and Bishop Evmenios of Chora, joined also by clergy of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and by those accompanying the Metropolitan of Rethymno, Archimandrite Vasilios Papadakis, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Anastasia of Rome in Rethymno, and Archimandrite Theologos Papalevyzakis, Spiritual Councillor of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Arkadi. Among the large congregation were the Consul General of Greece in Melbourne, Mr. Emmanuel Kakavelakis, the President of the Intercommunities Council of Victoria, Mr. Tony Tsourdalakis, and the former Secretary General of Hellenism Abroad and Public Diplomacy of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Ioannis Chrysoulakis.

During the Divine Liturgy, in an atmosphere of immense emotion, the handover took place by the Shepherd of the Church of Rethymno, of the reliquary containing the fragments of the holy relics of the Four Holy New Martyrs of Rethymno, Saints Manuel, Angelos, George and Nicholas, which will henceforth be kept in the Holy Monastery of Our Lady “Axion Esti”, for the blessing of its pilgrims and more broadly of the Christ-loving people of Melbourne, Victoria and all of Australia. This is the fulfillment of a fervent holy desire of the Cretans of Melbourne, who had submitted a relevant request for many years and had been waiting with hope, patience and faith.



“The most beautiful moment in the life of human beings and in the life of the Church is the moment of God,” Archbishop Makarios noted, filled with emotion, upon receiving the reliquary, urging the faithful to trust in God and to ask Him to do His will in their lives. His Eminence then referred to the blessed coincidence of this year’s anniversaries of the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia and the two hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Four Holy New Martyrs of Rethymno, to point out that with the historic ceremony of the transfer of the relics of the Saints to the Holy Monastery of “Axion Esti” the festive events for both anniversaries are sealed.

“If we humans wanted to design a more beautiful and more historic moment, we

could not do it," he emphasised, adding: "But God did it!" In conclusion, the Archbishop expressed heartfelt thanks to Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymno and Avlopotamos, on behalf of the entire local Church, noting that "your presence and your testimony are recorded in the history of our Holy Archdiocese."

In response, Metropolitan Prodromos spoke in praise of the piety and spiritual cultivation of the plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, stating characteristically that "the holy relics will remain here forever, to become a source of blessing in a place where the name of God is truly glorified, with people who deserve such a gift and grace". At another point, he addressed the members of the Cretan Community in particular, emphasising that they make their compatriots proud on the holy island of Greece. Finally, he expressed his gratitude to the Community for the warm hospitality he and his entourage received, and concluded his speech with the prayer "may our Saints protect you and bless you all".



It is noted that at the end of the Divine Liturgy, Archbishop Makarios awarded the highest honorary distinction of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, the medal of the Order of the Christ-Loving, to the Consul General of Greece in Melbourne, Mr. Emmanuel Kakavelakis. After a four-year fruitful service in Melbourne, Mr. Kakavelakis, already elevated to the rank of Ambassador, is about to depart Australia to undertake a new diplomatic mission in Syria. His Eminence thanked him cordially for his exemplary service in the "Greek city" of Melbourne, as well as for his impeccable cooperation with the Holy Archdiocese. "Always here in

Australia,” he assured him, “you will have many brothers, sisters and friends, and a















vema.com.au