29/01/2025

The Archbishop of Australia visited the Eusebio Leal House – Museum in Havana



Eusebio Leal Spengler (1942-2020) was an iconic Cuban figure, with international prestige and recognition. The late historian and intellectual was, for decades, a close collaborator of the country's leader Fidel Castro, who entrusted him with the management of the restoration program of the historic centre of Havana. He carried out this demanding project, thanks to which "Old Havana" was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. He served, among other things, as President of the Monuments Commission of the Cuban capital and dedicated his life to the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the city. He was also an advocate of religious freedom, having stated characteristically that Religion and Revolution "for me have never been incompatible."

With this conviction and being a lover of Byzantine culture, he contributed decisively to the cause of the erection of the Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas in Havana. In fact, in the early 2000s, he had visited the Phanar, to convey the will of Fidel Castro and the Government of Cuba to erect an Orthodox Church and to grant

it to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, while in 2004, during the historic visit of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Havana, he was present at the consecration ceremony of the Church, while he personally guided His All-Holiness through the monuments of the Cuban capital.

The memory of this great person and one of the “founders” of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Havana was honoured by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, who on Saturday, 25 January 2025, visited his former residence in Old Havana, which has been converted into a museum. As part of the official celebration of the 20th anniversary of the consecration of the Orthodox Church, an exhibition of photographic and audiovisual material from the construction phase of the Church, as well as from the consecration service and its bestowal by the late Fidel Castro to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, was organised at the Eusebio Leal House-Museum.



Archbishop Makarios, who represented His All-Holiness and the Mother Church of Constantinople at the celebrations, delivered a brief greeting before the visitors of the exhibition, the representative of the Cuban Government, Ms. Leira Sánchez Valdivia, and other state officials. His Eminence referred with deep respect and admiration to the late Eusebio Leal, speaking of a blessed person who loved his homeland and at the same time embraced values that are at the core of Christian teaching. “I believe that Eusebio Leal is a model for modern Cuban society,” he emphasised in his introduction, while expressing his emotion for the opportunity he

was given to express the gratitude of the Mother Church for what he offered to Orthodoxy.

Then recalling the Lord's commandment: "Love your enemies," he pointed out that "Eusebio Leal had in his heart the Gospel, which proclaims love for all; and for those who are friends, but even for those who are enemies." "He also understood," he continued, "that what the Orthodox Church offers to the people is only love. We only want people to have a beautiful smile and peace in their hearts. This is what we want and this is what we preach, and for this I thank all of you who love and support the Orthodox Church here in Cuba."



In conclusion, Archbishop Makarios conveyed to all those present the wishes and blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch, while expressing his gratitude for the warm hospitality and love he has received during his current visit to Cuba.


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Doctor Honoris Causa
Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler
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