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Message of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia on International Greek Language Day



“I was given the Greek language;
a poor house on Homer’s beaches.
My only care my language on Homer’s beaches…”

Today offers us an ideal opportunity to look back at the monumental work “Axion Esti” by our great poet Odysseas Elytis and, through his captivating verses, to reflect on the gratitude we owe, as well as the responsibility we bear, for an invaluable benefit of which we have become recipients: Gratitude for the Greek language that our ancestors gave us and a responsibility to preserve it as a precious treasure and to hand it over to future generations.

This language is indeed a precious treasure, which like no other, has illuminated the thoughts of philosophers and the research of scientists over the centuries, and has given inspiration to poets and a voice to the prayers of our Christ-loving people. A precious treasure that, with its cradle in “Homer’s beaches“, was generously shared with the world and enriched and enlivened European and global

civilization.

This treasure, which constitutes the “sole concern” of Odysseus Elytis, reminds us of the equally poignant “is there anything else in my mind but freedom and language?” by our national poet Dionysios Solomos, whose memory we honour today, along with the International Day of the Greek Language. Together, Elytis and Solomos call us to stand tall as Greeks, with feelings of gratitude towards the generations that preceded us, but also of responsibility towards those that follow.

And here, on the fifth continent, although the adversities that we have to overcome are undeniable, our responsibility to give the children of our Greek community the precious treasure that we have inherited, our Greek language, remains intact. Our Holy Archdiocese, through its parishes and schools and through all aspects of ecclesiastical life, strives with undiminished intensity to preserve, cultivate and highlight the language of our ancestors. I am certain that, in addition to our clergy and educators who work systematically and devotedly for the above purpose, we have as our fellow travellers every parent, every grandmother and every grandfather who are proud of their Greek Orthodox identity and of the unquenchable voice of the history of our Nation. May God enlighten and strengthen everyone in this difficult, relentless but also beautiful struggle!