

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: From the Divine Liturgy we draw inspiration and strength



The great feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was celebrated with deep reverence on Wednesday, 6 August 2025, at the Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of the Transfiguration on the island of Prote of Princes' Islands, the largest of the Princes' Islands.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presided over the festive Divine Liturgy, joined by a multitude of faithful, including Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan of the Armenians in Turkey, Archons of the Ecumenical Throne, and young pilgrims from the United States.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, following tradition, the Patriarch blessed grapes, distributing them to the faithful after the Dismissal. He then officiated a memorial service at the grave of Simeon Siniossoglou, a Great Benefactor of the Greek Nation, which lies beside the monastery church.

The celebration continued in the courtyard, where children of the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople, currently participating in the summer camp hosted on the island, performed traditional Asia Minor songs and dances, receiving warm applause from all present.

In his address, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew reflected on the theological and spiritual meaning of the Feast, stating: "For us Orthodox Christians, there is nothing in life more significant than our connection to Divine Worship. It is there that we experience God's presence, become one body and one community, and receive a foretaste of the heavenly Kingdom. It is also from there that we draw inspiration and strength to bear witness in the world to love, solidarity, and peace."

Speaking to the youth, the Patriarch emphasized the value of their camp experience: "We glorify God for granting you, our beloved children, the opportunity to enjoy days of joy and discovery on this island, to bask in the sun and sea, to play, to make friends, and most importantly, to deepen your faith in Christ. This relationship with Christ fills us with optimism, strengthens us, and helps us grow in love and responsibility."

He praised the summer camp leaders, volunteers, and supporters, particularly Mr. Adamantios Kombopoulos, Archon Primikērios and camp director, as well as the Board of the Princes' Islands Camp, for their dedication to offering children a space of joy, learning, and spiritual formation.

The Patriarch expressed satisfaction that this year the camp welcomed children from the Greek Orthodox community of Romania, Abkhazia, and the local Greek diaspora, and in the upcoming sessions will also host Armenian children from Istanbul, as their community's own camp remains non-operational, and young people from the Metropolis of Didymoteicho, Orestiada, and Soufli in Northern Greece.

"In the person of Mr. Kombopoulos," the Patriarch added, "we extend heartfelt congratulations to the Princes' Islands Camp Association, which this year celebrates 65 years since its founding, for opening its embrace in recent years to children of other ethnic backgrounds as well."

He also warmly welcomed Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan and the pilgrims from the United States, visiting under the auspices of the Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle (Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate) to strengthen the bonds of youth from the American Greek Orthodox community with the Mother Church in Constantinople.

This is the third consecutive year that sixteen young men and women from the U.S., accompanied by Archons, are visiting Constantinople, where they are offered a week-long pilgrimage program visiting sacred and historical sites of the Orthodox heritage, culminating in an audience with the Ecumenical Patriarch at the Phanar.

Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan, in his greeting, expressed heartfelt thanks to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for his decision to host Armenian children in the Patriarchal summer camp.

The camp's director had earlier welcomed the Patriarch and the distinguished guests with kind words, highlighting the significance of the feast and the ongoing ministry to the youth.

At lunchtime, the Ecumenical Patriarch blessed the festive table, and joined the children and guests in a joyful meal, marking the end of a day filled with spiritual celebration and communal joy.

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou

vema.com.au