

03/09/2025

A Song by ABBA, Dedicated to the Ecumenical Patriarch



H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden's Homily,
welcoming His All-Holiness Bartholomew,
Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch,
at the Thyranoxia Service of the St. George Cathedral of Stockholm

Your All-Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch,
Your Eminences,
Rev. Members of the Clergy,
Your Excellencies,
Archons and Distinguished Guests from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Finland, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, France, Norway and Denmark,
Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Beloved children,

It is with profound joy, gratitude, and deep spiritual emotion that we welcome Your All-Holiness to our Cathedral on this blessed day.

Your presence here, as the Spiritual Leader of world Orthodoxy and a tireless advocate of unity, peace, and ecological justice, is a blessing beyond measure for our local Church, for our faithful in Scandinavia, and for our youth, who thirst for spirituality in a complex world.

We gather in this holy church — recently restored — as living witnesses of a dream that, by God's grace, has become reality.

A dream to renew our sacred spaces, to strengthen our communities, and to sow the seeds of faith in the hearts of the next generation.

As the well-known Swedish group ABBA once sang:

"I have a dream, a song to sing,
To help me cope with anything..."

Indeed, we too have a dream — not only a song, but a vision rooted in Christ, nourished by the beauty of our Orthodox faith, and inspired by the enduring legacy of Hellenism and the Phanar.

It is a dream of building vibrant parishes, restoring our churches — as we did here in Stockholm, and in our Metropolitan Church in Oslo, and in our Hermitage in Rättvik— and expanding our presence, to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful across Scandinavia.

It is also a dream for our youth. A dream of giving them opportunities to grow in faith and fellowship. To offer them a spiritual home where they are not only welcomed, but empowered. Where they are not merely spectators, but protagonists in the life of the Church.

"If you see the wonder of a fairy tale,
You can take the future, even if you fail."

We see the wonder not in fairy tales, but in the miracle of our living Tradition. In every Divine Liturgy. In every child who learns to chant, to pray, to serve. In every act of love and self-sacrifice that defines our Orthodox identity.

Your All-Holiness,

Your visit today affirms our efforts and strengthens our resolve. You remind us that the Church is not a relic of the past, but a vessel of hope for the future. That even in the darkness of uncertainty, our light shines — because:

"I believe in angels,
Something good in everything I see..."

In every aspect of our local Church's life we see You, Your All-Holiness, our spiritual Father and guardian angel, as well as our clergy who labor with faithfulness, our laypeople -our members and friends- who give generously, and our visionary youth.

What a true blessing, thanks to Your presence, Your All-Holiness, to have with us from America prominent personalities, who serve Hellenism there, offering valuable services to the local Church there, from which we all learn. True models of faith and service.

Please allow me to express my deepest gratitude for the presence here of:

Your Patriarchal Entourage:

H.E. Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey,

The V. Rev. Archimandrite Aetios and

The V. Rev. Deacon Epiphaios,

H.E. Archbishop Elia of Finland,

H.E. Metropolitan Stefanos of Estonia,

H.E. Metropolitan Agathangelos of Phanarion

H.E. Archbishop Julio Murat of Orange, Apostolic Nuncio,

The V. Rev. Daniel Eklund, Dean of the Västerås Cathedral,

The V. Rev. Archimandrite Cornelius Osuzj,

The Rev. Protopresbyter Demetrios Demosthenous from Cyprus and his family,

The Rev. Protoprotodeacons Andreas and Marius,

The Hon. Minister of Digital Governance of Greece Mr. Demetrios Papastergiou and his wife,

The Hon. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece Mr. Ioannis-Michail Loverdos and his entourage,

H.E. Ambassador of Greece to Stockholm, Ms. Aikaterini Foundoulaki,

H.E. Ambassador of Cyprus to Stockholm, Mr. Solon Savva,

The Hon. Consul General of Panama in the USA, Ms. Georgia Athanasopoulos, and businessman Mr. Manolis Petroyiannis,

The Hon. Mr. Roger Haddad and his wife,

The Hon. Mr. Georgios Kontorinis,

The Honorable Dr. Isak Reichel, Swedish State Authorities SST Director,

The National Commander Archon Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis, accompanied by his wife Dr. Maria A. Limberakis,

The National Secretary Archon Gus M. Pablecas, accompanied by his wife Mrs. Gail Pablecas,

The Regional Commander Archon Gerry Ranglas, accompanied by his wife Mrs. Jeannie Ranglas,

The Regional Commander Archon Isidoros Garifalakis, accompanied by his wife Mrs. Maria Garifalakis,

Archon Mr. John Mindala, Creative Director Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Archon Mr. Demetris Bousis, accompanied by his wife Mrs. Eleni Bousis,

The National Philoptochos 1st Vice President Mrs. Anita Kartalopoulos, and Archon

Dr. Stamatis Kartalopoulos,
Former President of the AHEPA America, Mr. Savvas Tsivikos and his wife,
The distinguished journalist Mr. Vasileios Alexiou and his wife,
Drs. Alexandros and Vasiliki Georgiadis,
The President of the Pontian Association of Stockholm, Mr. Ilias Manoilidis,
Our Metropolis Executive Board Members: Mrs. Kyriaki Papadopoulou, Mrs. Fotini Batsela, Professor Nikolaos Venizelos, and Mr. Rafail Poumeyrau, Esq.,
The Clergy, the Parish Councils, the Members and Volunteers of our Metropolis.
As we cross new streams — of ministry, of outreach, of renewal — we do so with confidence. For, as the ABBA song concludes:

“I’ll cross the stream, I have a dream.”

May that dream, that vision, always be guided by Christ, and may the prayers of Your All-Holiness continue to guide, protect, and inspire us on this sacred journey.

Your All-Holiness,

There is no greater blessing for the faithful children than to embrace their Spiritual Father and Patriarch. And thanks be to God, our local Church takes pride in the fact that, during the past eleven years of my humble episcopal ministry, we have had the opportunity to welcome Your All-Holiness three times—once in Iceland and twice in Stockholm.

These have been eleven years of concentrated study and discipleship near Your God-elected Patriarchal Tenure, during which I have had the honor—twice already—of participating among the twelve Hierarchs who formed the Synod of the Mother Church.

Your words have always been encouraging. Near You, we learned to work diligently, taking inspiration from the truly remarkable endurance of the First Hierarch of Orthodoxy.

By Your side, we learned discernment, the noble dignity of the Phanar, and the Patriarchal hospitality.

We studied Your unwavering concern for all people without exception—clergy and laity, those near and those afar.

Everything we saw, everything we heard, and everything we experienced near You, Your All-Holiness, constitutes spiritual wealth—precious gifts and indelible experiences You have offered us, so that we may use them to shepherd our flock.

All these things will undoubtedly influence, shape, and define our ongoing ministry, our journey, and our mission in the modern world.

Pray for us, Your All-Holiness, that we may continue our ministry with even greater zeal and enthusiasm—to the glory of God, the honor of the Mother Church, and the spiritual benefit of the flock entrusted to us by Her.

In closing, I cry out with sacred reverence:

Many and healthy years to Your glorious Patriarchal Tenure!
Your All-Holiness, Welcome to your beloved flock in Scandinavia!

(photo, Angelos Panagiotopoulos)

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