

Ecumenical Patriarch makes historic visit to Sweden



His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I visited Stockholm, where he presided over the celebrations commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia, the 130th anniversary of the construction of the St. George Cathedral of Stockholm – which is currently undergoing the first phase of its complete exterior renovation –, and delivered the keynote address at the Metropolis' first-ever Clergy-Laity Assembly/Synaxis.

Patriarch Bartholomew arrived at Arlanda Airport on September 27, 2019, accompanied by Their Eminences Archbishop Sotirios of Canada and Metropolitan Athenagoras of Kydonies, the Rev. Deacon Vosporios Magkafas, Codicographer of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Mr. Panteleimon Vingas, Archon Megas Hartofylax of the Great Church of Christ, and Mr. Vasileios Grigoriadis. His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden was on hand to welcome the Patriarch at the airport, together with Metropolis Clergy, the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus, and local entrepreneur Mr. Christos Meletis.

That evening, Patriarch Bartholomew visited the Turkish Ambassador's residence, where His Excellency Ambassador Hakki Emre Yunt hosted a formal dinner in his honor.

On Saturday, September 28, 2019, the Holy Metropolis of Sweden held its inaugural Clergy-Laity Synaxis at the St. George Cathedral in Stockholm. The assembly was attended by 140 delegates from the 18 parishes, operating in the four nations comprising the Holy Metropolis, along with 43 members of the dialogue between the Orthodox Christian and Lutheran Churches. The Clergy-Laity Synaxis began with the agiasmos (blessing of the water) service officiated by Patriarch Bartholomew, and was followed by a greeting from the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus, the keynote address by the Ecumenical Patriarch, and speeches from 15 other distinguished individuals, active in the Church and academia.

Afterwards, Patriarch Bartholomew visited the Greek School in Stockholm, whereupon he immediately returned to the Cathedral to attend a luncheon offered in his honor by the local Church.

That evening, the Patriarch was given a tour of the Holy Metropolis' Library and Gallery of Heirlooms, while also receiving an update on the progress of the renovations taking place in the Cathedral's interior.

He then attended a dinner offered at the Cathedral facilities in honor of the volunteers serving the local Church. Patriarch Bartholomew congratulated the volunteers and invited Archbishop Sotirios to speak, with the latter delivering a touching address.

On Sunday, September 29, 2019, the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the St. George Cathedral in Stockholm, with His Eminence Archbishop Leo of Helsinki and all Finland and His Grace Bishop Elias of Tartu also in attendance. Many guests were on hand for the Divine Liturgy, including the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Sweden Antje Jackelén, Cardinal Anders Arborelius, Archbishop Benyamin Atas of the Syriac-Aramean Church, Bishop Anba Abakir of the Coptic Church, Lutheran Bishop Emerita Christina Odenberg, Ambassadors A. Frygranas, S. Liassides, and M. Diamanti, as well as Honorary Consuls C. Kakazoukis, R. A. Sigurdsson, and S. Dikos.

The ecclesiastical hymns were chanted under the direction of Mr. Panagiotis Pavlos, who was joined by the Very Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Jaakko Henrik Damaskinos Olkinuora, Dr. Andreas Selamsis, Dr. Stig Symeon Frøysov, Mr. Elias Gergi, Mr. Demetrios Batselas, Mr. Miltiades Soultanis, Dr. Joachim Phocas, and Mr. Evagoras Makridis.

The polychronion to the Patriarch was changed by the choir from the Finnish parish of St. Nicholas in Stockholm, under the direction of Mr. Jukka Aminoff.

The Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated in 11 languages: Greek, English,

Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish, Finnish, French, Romanian, Georgian, and Slavonic.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the opening of the Museum of Hellenic Christian Heritage, the Gallery of Heirlooms, the new church offices, and library was conducted. Afterwards, a reception was held in the Cathedral hall, courtesy of the Ladies Philoptochos Society led by its president Mrs. Fotini Batsela, and luncheons followed at a local area restaurant and the church hall.

That afternoon, Patriarch Bartholomew visited the St. Ephrem Cathedral of the Syriac-Aramean Church in the district of Södertälje, following an invitation by Archbishop Benjamin Atas, with a reception held on site, in honor of His All-Holiness.

On Monday morning September 30, 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew visited local places of interest in Stockholm. He subsequently visited the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Stockholm, where he attended an official luncheon in his honor, hosted by Cardinal Anders Arborelius. That evening, the Patriarch and his entourage attended a dinner in his honor, held at the residence of the Greek Ambassador and hosted by His Excellency Ambassador Andreas Fryganas.

On Tuesday, October 1, 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew met with the Prime Minister of Sweden His Excellency Mr. Stefan Löfven and subsequently headed to Uppsala, where he met with the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Sweden Antje Jackelén and the members of its assembly of bishops at the Archbishop's residence in Uppsala.

During his visit, he attended a luncheon hosted in his honor and delivered an address at the Uppsala Cathedral, for the start of the Clergy-Laity Assembly of the Lutheran Church, which was attended by His Majesty the King of Sweden Carl Gustaf XVI and Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess Victoria – with whom he held a private meeting –, and later on with the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament Honorable Mr. Andreas Norlén.

That afternoon, the Patriarch and his entourage departed for Constantinople.

Patriarch Bartholomew was accompanied to Stockholm's Arlanda Airport by Metropolitan Cleopas, the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus, and entrepreneur Mr. Christos Meletis.

Photo credit: Holy Metropolis of Sweden, Ms. Evangelia Roumeliotous, Messrs. Panteleimon Vingas, George Vassiliou and Nikoloas Kitsios.

- Source: [Holy Metropolis of Sweden / Facebook](#)