

Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon on the Theological School of Halki



After 55 years, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's request for the reopening of the Theological School of Halki is moving toward a successful conclusion and, as Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon stated exclusively to parapolitika.gr, "the ball is finally rolling." Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel is the second-ranking hierarch of the Ecumenical Throne and the closest and most trusted collaborator of the Ecumenical Patriarch. For this reason, he accompanied him to his meeting with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the Presidential Palace.

When is the Theological School of Halki expected to reopen?

Speaking to parapolitika.gr, Metropolitan Emmanuel did not conceal his satisfaction at the favorable development of the matter, while also clarifying the procedures for reopening the School, which for decades supplied clergy not only to the Ecumenical Patriarchate but also to other Orthodox Churches and has remained closed for half a century.

As the Elder Metropolitan of Chalcedon explained: "The Turkish President instructed the President of Turkey's Higher Education Council, the YÖK, to move forward with the process and the dialogue that is taking place with the

Patriarchate's competent committee. We do not know whether it will open in one month or two months. First of all, as you know, the School is currently undergoing renovation by Archon Mr Martinos. The works have not yet been completed, so it is impossible to move into a school building that is still unfinished. That is the first issue. The second concerns the procedure itself and how long the dialogue we are conducting will take. We have submitted specific proposals. The President gave us his instructions and was very positive. Beyond that, I cannot know how much time it will require."

Sources indicate that President Erdoğan has instructed that discussions be intensified in order to resolve the remaining procedural matters. Metropolitan Emmanuel noted that there is not yet a specific timetable, as the process is still unfolding.

"As in Greece and in every country, there is a procedure and certain conditions that must be fulfilled. What is positive, however, is that after so many years he has given instructions for the School to reopen, in the manner determined by the competent committee."

The reopening of the Theological School of Halki also signals a change in the Turkish government's attitude toward the Phanar. According to Metropolitan Emmanuel, this is perhaps the most significant aspect of all.

"For so many years there had been no progress on this issue. His All-Holiness had raised it repeatedly. The School has been closed since 1971. We must truly see this as a major change and as an opportunity now being given to us to move forward."



How will the Theological School of Halki operate?

The curriculum and operational structure of the School have not yet been finalised, as these matters remain under discussion between Turkey's Higher Education Council and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

As Metropolitan Emmanuel explained: "I cannot go into details regarding how it will function. I am not a member of the committee discussing these matters. I know that there is a proposal from the Patriarchate for it to operate initially as a two-year postgraduate program for graduates of theological faculties who wish to pursue a master's degree. All of the details are still under discussion. What is essential is that 'the ball is finally rolling.' That says everything. The rest will emerge through the dialogue that the Patriarchate is conducting."

The role of President Donald Trump

The Theological School of Halki, located on the island of Halki in the Princes' Islands, has stood empty since 1971, when the Turkish government suspended its operation through legislation.

Among its graduates are His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and many other Orthodox patriarchs, metropolitans, theologians, priests, and bishops. Students came from throughout the world, giving the School a distinctly international character.

It is noteworthy that President Erdoğan's decision to give the "green light" for the School's reopening reportedly followed encouragement from U.S. President Donald Trump during their meeting at the White House in September. Trump's forthcoming visit to Ankara in connection with the NATO Summit is also said to have accelerated the Turkish President's decision.

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