

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Holy Monastery of Panagia Faneromeni in Cyzicus: “Once Again, We Are Here Today!”



His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presided over the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 23 August, for the Leave-taking of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the “Nine Days of the Panagia”, amid the ruins of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Faneromeni in Cyzicus.

Concelebrating with His All-Holiness were His Eminence Metropolitan Bartholomew of Smyrna and His Grace Bishop Nicholas of Amathous, a Hierarch of the Church of Cyprus.

Prayerfully present were Their Eminences Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria; clergy and monks; Archons of the Great Church of Christ; descendants of refugees from Artaki now residing in Nea Artaki, Evia, and other regions of Greece; and pilgrims from Constantinople and Imbros.

Also present were the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Artaki (Erdek), together with other representatives of the local authorities.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness conducted a Trisagion for the repose of the late Patriarch Joachim III, who bestowed upon the Monastery the status of a Patriarchal Stavropegion, and of all those who had served at this sacred place.

In his address following the dismissal, His All-Holiness, visibly moved, referred to this year's pilgrimage to the ruins of the once splendid and magnificent Holy Monastery of Panagia Faneromeni, which had been a most sacred place of pilgrimage for the people of Artaki and all the faithful of the wider region.

"God has permitted us once again this year to come to historic Cyzicus and to celebrate the Leave-taking of the venerable Feast of the most sacred Dormition and Translation into Heaven of our most blessed Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary! What grace! What a blessing! What joy and exultation!

"Here, amid the sacred ruins of the ancient Monastery of Panagia Faneromeni in Cyzicus, the land of the ancient Pelasgians and Byzantine Romans, we came for the first time after the sorrowful events of 1922 in the year 2015, when we celebrated the Feast of Panagia Faneromeni after ninety-three years of silence. And today, once again, we are here!

"We stand here filled with hope, reverence and compunction, with the entire longing of our souls directed towards the Mother of God, who gave the God-Man to humanity. We gaze upon her who is 'higher than the heavens and purer than the radiance of the sun', who entrusted her soul and body into the hands of our Saviour who was born from her. We gaze upon her through whom 'the salvation of the entire human race came to pass'!"

The Patriarch recalled that the shrine's wonderworking icon of Panagia Faneromeni, which was transferred from the Monastery a century ago, is preserved at the Phanar. "As we preside, standing upon the martyric Patriarchal Throne in the Venerable Patriarchal Church, we behold before us the renowned icon of Panagia

Faneromeni, which for a century has been given refuge at the Phanar. She receives the hidden sighs of our Patriarchal heart! She hears our reverent petitions and supplications for the Great Church, for the Nation, for Orthodoxy throughout the world, for suffering humanity and for the peace of the entire world!



“Faneromeni mystically reveals the certainty of God’s love, the truth of divine mercy and the assurance of hope in Christ! Together with the Patriarch, the multitude worshipping at the See of the Great Church places before Panagia Faneromeni its heartfelt reverence and unashamed hope. “Panagia Faneromeni sanctifies us day and night and accompanies us through the difficult moments of everyday life and every extraordinary circumstance. Faneromeni is our refuge and support.

“You understand, brothers and children, our natural and fervent desire to come to this now-deserted ancient dwelling of the Theotokos, to her ruined Monastery,

which since 1903 has been a venerable Patriarchal Stavropegion by the pious decision of our late predecessor, Patriarch Joachim III the Magnificent. We desired to honour the place where, for many centuries, the Theotokos was venerated, countless souls were renewed, Christian virtue spread its fragrance, the name of God was glorified and the piety of the Orthodox was magnified.

“These ruins around us emanate grace and sanctification! They are sacred relics of living devotion, silent yet resounding preachers of the mighty works of Christ and of the blessings that His Most Holy Mother bestowed in abundance upon our Fathers and our Nation.

“In spirit, we venerate every inch of this ground, every stone, every grain of mortar and every fragment of tile. For everything here bears the grace of Panagia Faneromeni; everything bears witness to her ‘comely glory’, radiant with the uncreated splendour of the divine glory of her Son!”



The Ecumenical Patriarch then referred to the particular honour bestowed by Orthodox Christians upon the Most Holy Theotokos. “Popular piety speaks of the ‘Nine Days of the Panagia’. Our Panagia, of course, has no need of memorial services!” His All-Holiness stated, continuing: “It is she who unceasingly brings all of us, all Christians and all humanity to the remembrance of her Son. She herself is the living memory of the entire human race before the Lord of life and death!

“‘Living even after death’, she continually saves through her powerful intercessions

her inheritance—that is, all of us, whom her Lord and God entrusted to her from the height of the Cross. “We therefore celebrate not a ‘Nine-Day Memorial Service’, but the radiant Leave-taking of this great Feast of the Mother of God, which we rightly call the ‘Pascha of summer’!”

At another point in his address, His All-Holiness emphasised: “Rightly, therefore, brothers, sisters and children, have we all hastened here with joyful steps to celebrate the Leave-taking of her most honourable feast in a place especially familiar and beloved to her, in a house where, for centuries, her heart rejoiced at the ascetic struggles of the Fathers of the Monastery and at the devotion of the people of Artaki and all the Christians of the Cyzicus Peninsula, Mysia, the islands of the Sea of Marmara and all the surrounding regions.

“May our prayer be acceptable, and may we shortly depart filled with the grace and blessing of the Mother of God! May our supplications be heard for the peace of our troubled world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God and for the enlightenment of those who hold the destinies of nations in their hands!”

The Patriarch congratulated all those who had gathered to honour the Panagia, together with “all those who laboured in preparing the feast”. He made particular mention of Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria, who were prayerfully present.

Speaking in Turkish, His All-Holiness also thanked the Governor of the region, together with the District Governor and Mayor of Artaki, for granting permission and providing every assistance for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at this historic site, which is now embraced by luxuriant vegetation and dense forest.

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou



















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