

Archbishop Makarios of Australia: “The Icon is a threshold connecting Earth with Heaven, the temporal with the eternal”



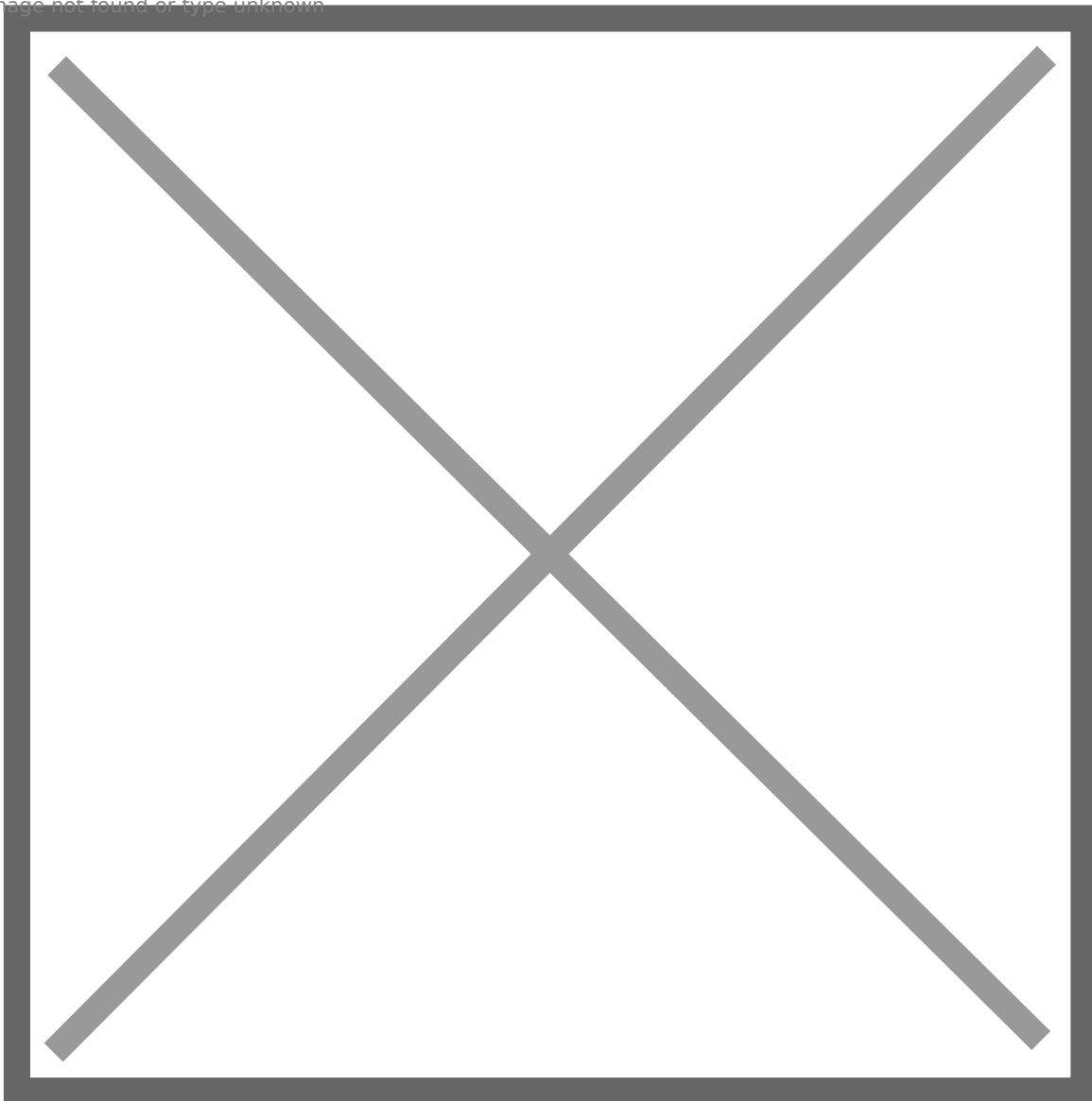
“In the Orthodox tradition, the sacred icon constitutes a threshold that connects earth with heaven, the temporal with the eternal. As the faithful stand before an icon, they become aware that the Kingdom of God is not something distant or abstract, but is present and active within the life of the world. When we contemplate it with a prayerful disposition, the icon becomes a window to the divine, directing our gaze beyond its visible form towards the person depicted and, ultimately, towards the Triune God and the eternal Kingdom.”

Invoking the above theological truth, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia described as particularly apt the title, “Divine Thresholds: Icons and the Orthodox Christian World”, of the exhibition at the Hellenic Museum in Melbourne,

which was officially opened on Friday, 28 August.

During his visit to the Hellenic Museum, His Eminence was warmly welcomed by its President, Mr Harry Stamoulis, and the members of the Board of Directors, and was given a tour of the exhibition by Ms Sarah Craig, Director of the Museum. During the tour, he had the opportunity to admire more than 130 exhibits—icons and sacred objects—which originate from private and public collections from across Australia and span a period from the 15th to the 19th century. Indeed, the exhibition also includes sacred treasures from the Archbishop's personal collection, which were graciously loaned temporarily in order to enrich the exhibition.

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Subsequently, in the address he delivered during the official opening ceremony, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia warmly congratulated the administration of the Hellenic Museum and all those who contributed to the exhibition, both for the initiative itself and for the spirit in which they approached

this undertaking.

“I am particularly pleased,” he noted, “that this exhibition does not seek merely to present icons as objects of artistic and historical value, but also to highlight their theological significance and the living role they play in the liturgical life and everyday experience of Orthodox Christians.”

“In a society that is often characterised by rapid change and uncertainty,” he observed, “icons continue to offer a powerful witness to beauty, holiness and hope. They remind us that human life finds its fulfilment in communion with God and in the transformation of the human person according to the model of Christ.”

His Eminence also respectfully commemorated the late Spiros Stamoulis, who founded the Hellenic Museum in Melbourne in 2007 in memory of his daughter, Nafsika. He acknowledged the decisive role that the Museum has since played in promoting Greek culture, art and history, while expressing his confidence that it will continue successfully to fulfil its mission for many years to come.

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Concluding his address, the Archbishop expressed the hope that the “Divine Thresholds” exhibition—which will remain open to the public until the end of August 2027—would inspire in all those who visit it a deeper respect and appreciation for the spiritual and cultural heritage of Orthodoxy; cultivate meaningful dialogue between faith and culture; and open the hearts of visitors to the transcendent beauty which sacred icons so faithfully reveal.

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Among those present at the opening of the exhibition at the Hermitage Museum were His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Chora; the Victorian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Small and Family Business, and Veterans, Ms Natalie Suleyman; and Archbishop of the Great Church of Constantinople, Mr Tony Tsourdukakis.

