

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “Every cross we bear with patience and faith becomes a ladder to the resurrection”



The Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross was celebrated in a prayerful atmosphere at the Sacred Centre of Orthodoxy.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presided at the Divine Liturgy celebrated on Monday, 14 September, with Their Eminences, Elder Metropolitan Dimitrios of the Princes’ Islands; Metropolitan Meliton of Philadelphia; Metropolitan Eirinaios of Myriophytos and Peristasis; Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra; Metropolitan Ioakeim of Bursa; and Metropolitan Theodoros of Seleucia also presiding from the synthronon.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated, according to order, by the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Archimandrite Bosphorius, together with the Under-Secretary, Deacon Oikoumenios.

Following the ceremony of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross, His All-Holiness, in accordance with tradition, distributed flowers and basil to the Hierarchs, the clergy of the Patriarchal Court and the Archons who came forward to venerate, and finally

to all the faithful.

Their Graces Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus and Bishop Paisios of Xanthoupolis attended the Divine Liturgy, together with Archons of the Great Church of Christ and faithful from Constantinople and abroad.

Following the Dismissal, His All-Holiness bestowed upon Mr Apostolos Kralidis, Professor and Chair of the Department of Social Theology and Christian Culture of the Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Offikion of Archon Didaskalos of the Church.

In his address, His All-Holiness congratulated the new Archon and stated that he had bestowed this honorary distinction upon him in recognition of his service to the Church, noting the following:

“You are Professor of the History of Religions in the Department of Social Theology and Christian Culture of the Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Your academic career has been long and multifaceted. You served for an entire decade as a research associate at the Centre for Byzantine Research of the Aristotle University. Alongside your university, teaching and scholarly responsibilities, you have participated in various ecclesiastical institutions, scientific committees and the organisation of numerous conferences. Commendable is your presence in the life of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of Vlatadon and in the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies. You respect the Holy Great Church of Christ and its Pan-Orthodox, Pan-Christian and universal witness. We rejoice particularly in the fact that, in your capacity as Chair of the Department of Social Theology and Christian Culture, as a member of the Deanery of the Faculty of Theology and of the Senate of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, you contribute decisively to the establishment of courses concerning the history, identity and mission of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

“Your extensive engagement with the History of Religions, with particular emphasis on Greco-Roman antiquity and the Byzantine period, the relations of Byzantium and its theology with Islam, as well as the contemporary role of religions and interreligious dialogue, constitutes a highly timely contribution to understanding the spirit of our age, during which religions claim a significant role in the lives of people, societies and cultures. It has been written that religious pluralism and the strong presence of religions constitute a more serious challenge for Christianity than secularisation.

“The manner in which you combine, in your scholarly work, the perspectives of

religious studies and theology confirms the value of knowledge of religions for theological work, while at the same time affirming the distinctive identity of theology, which 'is not obliged to practise religious studies in order to demonstrate its scientific character and defend its place in the University', the Palladium of the Sciences. Theology is not a 'Religious Studies of Christianity'. The people of God expect from the Sacred Science answers to their existential questions in the spirit of the Gospel of salvation, and not merely information about Christianity."

The Patriarch then emphasised: "From this moment, you will bear the Cross of the Brotherhood of Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate 'Panagia Pammakaristos'. The Cross, 'the most significant and characteristic of all Christian symbols', signifies that you serve the Great Church of Constantinople in its sacred mission as one who bears the Cross together with the Patriarch, alongside all the Archons of the Throne. For an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, taking up the Cross means serving the Holy Great Church of Christ with devotion and humility and standing upright in its defence whenever its rights are challenged."

Patriarchal Vespers at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Topkapı

On the eve of the Feast, the Patriarch, in accordance with custom, presided at Great Vespers celebrated at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Topkapı.

The homily was preached by the Very Reverend Grand Syncellus Ieronymos, Librarian of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

His All-Holiness was welcomed with an address by His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria, Supervisor of the Hypsomatheia District.

In his response, the Patriarch referred to the significance of the Cross in the life of the Christian, noting that it is not merely a symbol of sacrifice, but also a sign of unconquerable victory.

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